PATTERNS OF POWER · THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE

The Ethiopian Empire under Menelik II

The Complete Study · 1865 — 1889 — 1974

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with Claude (Anthropic) · 2026

held as tested, not revealed

Held as tested, not revealed.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series.
Primary sources quoted exactly; modern scholarship paraphrased and credited.
Contested figures given as ranges. Nothing reconstructed from memory.

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Preface and Outline

Front matter · what the study was built to test, how it was made, the disciplines it holds itself to, and a map of its fourteen parts

The spine

This collection has examined more than a dozen conquests and has found the same shapes recurring in nearly all of them — a floor of force, a settlement of who owns what among the armed, a robe cut to whatever an audience already honours, a formation installed in children before they can weigh it, and a seam between what is said and what is done. It has also found, in the African colonial cases, a consistent set of additional features: a legal fiction converting land into something grantable, extraction sorted by caste, formation withheld from the majority, a seam split in two by distance, and a collapse arriving when a metropole's will emptied rather than when the ruled beat the floor.

The Asante study proposed that this last cluster is misnamed. Its argument was that the so-called colonial bend is produced not by conquest at all but by **accountability** — by the fact that a colonial governor acts at a distance on behalf of people who will read about it. Remove the metropole, that study found, and the fictions, the registers, the categories and the withheld formation all disappear, while the conquest, the extraction and the killing stay exactly where they were.

Ethiopia was chosen because it splits the variable in a way no other case in the collection can.

Menelik II answered to nobody at home. There was no parliament, no electorate, no taxpayer, no press worth the name — the first Amharic newspaper ran to twenty-four handwritten copies circulating in his own court — and no public whose belief funded the enterprise. And he answered continuously, in writing, to five European governments, because their recognition was the difference between being a sovereign and being partitioned.

A conquest with an audience but no metropole. The prediction was therefore sharp and falsifiable: the outward-facing half of the bend should appear, and the inward-facing half should not.

The result is a split, and the split is the study's contribution. The outward half is confirmed about as strongly as one case can confirm anything: the conquest was

narrated to Europe in advance, justified in Europe's own vocabulary, written into treaties, and accompanied by a coin struck at the Paris Mint that made up five per cent of the coins in the emperor's own treasury. The inward half divides. There is no settlement statute — the southern highlands were converted into grantable property by a rope, a rank schedule and a claim about the fourteenth century — and there are no fiscal statistics, because an empire that assigns households to individuals produces no aggregate to audit. But formation was withheld anyway, and the metropole cannot be the reason, because the door at the top of this order was demonstrably open: a man taken captive in Menelik's own southern campaigns became his Minister of War for thirty years and, in 1916, the man who deposed an emperor.

So the bend is two bends with different causes. The outward apparatus is generated by an auditor — any party who can withhold something the order cannot get elsewhere and who will read a document before deciding — and a metropole is only its commonest species; a recognition-granting peer group produces it, and so does a creditor with a lien. The inward features are overdetermined, arising from simple incapacity as readily as from anxiety about a franchise at home, and are therefore diagnostic of nothing on their own.

How it was built

One module at a time, verification before writing, over the arc the Field Manual sets out: a landscape and twelve modules, each with a framework function, each obliged to contribute a revision or refinement back to the framework rather than merely applying it.

Public-domain primary sources are quoted exactly and in the original where the original could be reached. The ratified Italian text of the Treaty of Wuchale carries more weight here than any other document, and two of its articles are the study's load-bearing evidence: Article VI, which reserved the arms trade through Massawa to the King of Kings of Ethiopia alone and put Italian soldiers on the escort, and Article XVII, whose Italian and Amharic versions do not agree while Article XIX between them certifies that they do. Budge's 1922 edition supplies the *Kebra Nagast*'s closing chapter and its colophon — in which a named editor, five named collaborators and a named provincial patron record the manufacture of the text that founded a dynasty — together with Prince Kasa's letter to Earl Granville of 10 August 1872, in which a future emperor tells a foreign minister that without a particular manuscript his own people will not obey his orders.

Modern copyrighted scholarship is paraphrased and credited, never quoted at length. Where wording or provenance could not be confirmed, the line was dropped or

flagged rather than guessed. Contested figures are given as ranges, and there are a great many of them.

What could not be obtained

Every module carries its weakest evidence on its own face rather than in a footnote. Six gaps run under the whole study and should be stated together.

The claim that Menelik outlawed the *caffee* assemblies rests on Atseme as quoted in the Oromo studies literature, and Bartels's finding that *gadaa* was reduced to a ritual institution reaches this study the same way; neither has been traced to an archival original, and between them they carry the formation module's central contribution and the whole of the liberty module's foreclosure column.

The Anole account — the cutting of hands and breasts after the Arsi defeat at Azule — rests on Arsi oral tradition, is stated by its principal scholar to be a tragedy on which Ethiopian sources are silent, and is denied by a substantial body of opinion. The contemporary missionary source most often cited in its support, Martial de Salviac's *Un peuple antique au pays de Ménélik* of 1901, has not been consulted here at all — which matters beyond that single question, because de Salviac's estimate that the Oromo population fell from ten million to five is the most politically load-bearing number in this entire historiography.

The finding that no settlement statute exists is a negative resting on a failure to find one. The Amharic wording of Wuchale's seventeenth article has not been checked against the text, though the dispute that led to Adwa turns on a single verb. The reading of Haile Selassie's twentieth-century reforms as having severed armed service from land tenure is this study's own and is not drawn from any specialist literature that argues it in those terms.

And one limitation runs beneath all of them. Almost nothing survives in which an ordinary *gabbar* speaks. The record of this order is overwhelmingly northern, Christian, written and interested: court chronicles, church productions, European travellers who were the conqueror's guests, and oral testimony collected two and three generations later by researchers on both sides of an argument that is still being conducted with weapons. The silences here are not absences of events. They are absences of scribes.

The discipline

This historiography is politically live. It bears directly on arguments about who is indigenous to what that have contributed to real violence within the last five years.

That is not a reason to avoid the subject or to soften it. It is a reason to be exact: contested figures as ranges, the arguing party named whenever a claim is reported, both the Oromo-nationalist and the Ethiopianist positions stated at full strength before anything is adjudicated, and a refusal of both available comforts — the heroic empire that defeated colonialism and did nothing else, and the European colonialism with a different complexion.

Legibility is not pardon. To explain why an emperor with a rifle monopoly chose terror over negotiation in Arsi, why a settlement could be performed without a statute, and why the head of a national church had to be bought from a patriarch in another country is to describe a mechanism, not to excuse it. Equally, a study that cannot credit what an order actually did has stopped measuring anything. This one was genuinely open at the top: Ras Gobana Dacche was an Oromo who commanded the conquest of Oromo country; Fitawrari Habte Giyorgis was taken captive in that conquest and ran the war ministry for thirty years; Ras Mikael of Wollo was an Oromo and a convert from Islam who became the most powerful man in the empire. There is no European colony in Africa where any of that was structurally possible.

And it was closed at the bottom. A *gabbar* could not cross — not because of his blood, to which this empire was genuinely indifferent, but because the qualification for entry had become a claim to land, and his had been measured away with a rope.

Both columns stand. Neither cancels the other. Carrying both at once is the whole of the method.

The arithmetic is laid out. The sum is left to the reader.

The arc

Landscape · And He Approved, And Said Unto Me, Work. The ground and the orders already standing on it. A roof of high country with a malarial moat, a book whose manufacture is dated and signed by the men who made it at the command of a provincial governor then in revolt against the dynasty it glorifies, a century in which there was an emperor at Gondar who decided nothing, a republic in the south whose eight-year war-office had just stopped rotating, and a boy brought down from Maqdala in 1865 with a province, a claim, and nowhere to go but south.

1 · For the King of Kings Alone. The floor of force. A rifle monopoly obtained on credit from three European governments in succession and written into treaty as an exclusive right of import through the region's principal port — with Italian soldiers on the escort, and every other ruler in the Horn disarmed by a clause that does not mention them.

2 · The Rope and the Third. The settlement. What the conquest found, what a measuring rope converted it into, who received the two-thirds and who kept the one-third — and the statute that was never written, because nobody was going to read it.

3 · An Island of Christians in a Sea of Pagans. The robe. Two of them: one Solomonic, for the men whose obedience the order ran on, and one written for five European governments in their own justificatory idiom by a man who was at that moment conquering the pagans in question.

4 · Who Named the Child. Formation. Which institution owned the child at four and at eight in each of the orders on this ground, and what it means that this empire outlawed the assembly and left the naming rite.

5 · Where the Troops Dare Not Venture. The cost column. Why the ordinary man complied — run separately for six populations, because a peasant in Jimma and a peasant in Limmu lived under materially different arrangements for fifty years on account of a decision two kings took before either of them was born.

6 · In Slaves, Ivory and Gold. Extraction. The largest stream had no name and no ledger; the smallest had a coin struck at the Paris Mint that nobody used.

7 · No Slave-Market in the Capital. Information and suppression. Two seams, only one of which carried traffic — and what happened when the concealed half was finally assembled and published by a government preparing to invade.

8 · Appoint and Demote. Elite coordination and the default. Two nobilities with incompatible sources of title, an emperor holding the tap on one of them, and the eighteen months in which the whole thing inverted.

9 · The Right Hand and the Left. Plurality or foreclosure. Real protections, none of them made by the people they protected — and an accounting of what this order destroyed that was better than anything it kept.

10 · To Eat and Drink as They Did. Change and collapse. Why the arrangement could not be moved by the people it was built on, and how the clause its makers thought they had repaired became the one that ended it.

11 · The Evil Days. The grim accounting. The sword column, the metabolic column, and why the two cannot be apportioned in a country where an imported cattle plague was killing up to a third of the population in the same years as the conquest.

12 · The Verb and the Rope. Convergence and divergence. What the case did to the proposition it was chosen to test, where it stands against the conquests that had metropoles and the one that had nothing, and the strongest case against everything above — stated in full and answered.

LANDSCAPE

And He Approved, and Said Unto Me, Work

The ground Menelik was born on and the orders already standing upon it — north and south, each of them a former conquest, and most of them with a date.

The ground, and why there are two of it

Every study in this collection begins by reconstructing the country a conquest fell on, because a conquest performed upon empty scenery cannot be read at all. You have to know who held the means of violence, how the wealth was already divided, and what the people had been formed to believe was rightful, before you can say what the conquerors actually did — and the answer is almost never that they arrived among people who had no arrangements. The colonial cases in this collection reconstruct two grounds, the land invaded and the land that invaded it, because a colonial governor answers to a public the conquered will never see, and the working principle of the whole enterprise is the distance between what is done on one shore and what is said about it on the other.

This case also has two grounds, and that is the reason for choosing it. But they are not a colony and a metropole. They are two societies on one plateau, six hundred miles apart at the extremes and often much less, sharing a mountain range, a set of trade routes, a climate and a good deal of ancestry, and separated by a religion, a script, a plough, a form of land tenure and about a thousand years of asymmetric contact. Neither was anybody's homeland audience. The man who conquered the second on behalf of the first was answerable, for what he did there, to nobody at home at all — no parliament, no taxpayer, no press, no electorate whose belief funded the army. What he was answerable to, continuously and in writing, was a set of European governments a long way off whose recognition was the difference between being a sovereign and being partitioned. That is an unusual arrangement and it is the reason this study exists.

There are Europeans in this landscape and they belong in it. They are on the Red Sea coast throughout, they sell the rifles that decide everything, and by the 1880s they are on the beaches in force. But they are not the second shore. Through the whole period that follows they could not put an army on the plateau and keep it there; the one that tried was destroyed. They are a market with cannon and a diplomatic problem, which is what they were.

A last preliminary, and it is not a formality. This historiography is not settled and it is not academic. What follows bears directly on arguments now live in Ethiopia about who is indigenous to which ground, arguments that have contributed to real violence within the last five years. That is not a reason to avoid the subject and it is not a reason to soften it. It is a reason to be exact about what the evidence shows, to give contested figures as ranges, to say who is arguing whenever a claim is reported, and to refuse both of the comforts on offer — the heroic empire that defeated colonialism and did nothing else, and the European colonialism with a different complexion. Neither is true, and the arithmetic laid out below is left for the reader to add.

The roof and the moat

Begin with the rock, because it fixes more here than in almost any case in this collection.

The Ethiopian highlands are the largest continuous mass of high ground in Africa. Little of the surface falls below fifteen hundred metres and the summits reach some four and a half thousand; modern estimates put roughly two-fifths of the country's land area in the highlands and something like four-fifths of its people. The plateau is cut by the Great Rift Valley running north-east to south-west, and gashed everywhere else by river gorges — the Blue Nile's canyon is more than a kilometre deep in places — so that two districts visible from one another across a valley may be two days apart on foot. The old Amharic reckoning of altitude, still used, is a reckoning of climate and therefore of what can be grown and who can live: *qolla* below roughly eighteen hundred metres, hot, malarial, thin-soiled; *weyna dega* between about eighteen hundred and twenty-four hundred, temperate, the most productive ground in the country and the ground almost every capital has stood on; *dega* above that, cool, barley and pulses; and *wurch*, the frost belt above three thousand two hundred, grazing and little else.

Two consequences follow immediately and they run through everything.

The first is that the plateau is a fortress with a moat. An army coming from the sea has to cross the Danakil or the Somali lowlands, where the heat kills and the water is scarce, and then climb an escarpment through defiles where a defender who knows the ground can wait. That is what happened to an Egyptian column at Gundet in November 1875 and to a much larger Egyptian army at Gura in March 1876, and it is what would happen again on a larger scale twenty years later. The moat also works inward: the lowlands were held by pastoralists — Afar, Somali, Borana — whom no highland state ever administered, only raided, taxed at the caravan halt, or left alone.

The second is that the plateau is very hard to unify and very easy to fragment. There is no navigable river, no road a wheel could use, no coast under highland control, and no way to move a large body of men quickly. An imperial army in this country was a walking town: it lived off the districts it passed through, it moved in the dry months between the September harvest and the June rains, and it dispersed when the campaign ended because nobody could feed it standing still. Richard Caulk's work on soldiers and peasants in Ethiopia between about 1850 and 1935 is the sharpest modern statement of what that meant at ground level — that the peasantry's principal experience of the state, for centuries, was the arrival of armed men entitled to be fed. The cost of moving force was the permanent constraint on every apex in this study, and every institution described below is in some part an answer to it.

The ecology also sorts the wealth, and it sorts it in a direction that matters enormously. The northern and central highlands are grain country worked with the ox-drawn scratch plough, an implement with no equivalent elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, growing teff, barley, wheat and pulses. Grain is storable, measurable, and taxable in kind, and a plough farmer is tied to his fields in a way a shifting cultivator is not. The south-west is different country: wetter, forested, warmer, worked largely by hoe, and built on *ensete*, the false banana, a perennial that is harvested by digging up the corm and can be left standing for years — a crop that supports very dense populations and does not sit in a granary where a tax collector can find it. The south-west also grows coffee, which is indigenous to those forests, and it held the ivory, the civet, the gold and the slave routes that fed both the Red Sea and the Nile trades.

So the arithmetic of the plateau, stated plainly, is this. The north held the script, the church, the plough and the dynastic claim, and was poor. The south-west held the coffee, the ivory, the gold, the rainfall and the people, and had no unified state. Anybody sitting in Shewa, on the hinge between them, with rifles and a hungry army, was going to look south. That is not a moral observation. It is a description of the map.

What a man in Gojjam owned, and why it could not be sold

The northern highlands held land in a way that is easy to misread and that will matter every time this study reaches a settlement.

A northern peasant did not own a farm. He held *rist* — a claim to a share of the land first held by an ancestor, traceable through either parent, asserted before the elders who administered the descent group's holding. Allan Hoben's fieldwork among the Amhara is the standard reconstruction and its central point is the one worth holding: *rist* was in principle inalienable and inheritable, it could be claimed through any line of descent, and whether a man could actually make his claim good depended on his

standing, his kin and his politics as much as on his genealogy. Over the same ground lay *gult* — the right, granted by a king or a lord, to take the tribute owed by the cultivators of a defined area, usually in return for service, most often military. Hoben's formulation is the one nearly everyone has since worked from: these are not two kinds of land but two kinds of right over the same land, and a single *gult* estate of a few square miles might contain the strip fields of scores or hundreds of *rist*-holding farmers. Donald Crummey's work on Gondarine land documents complicates the picture — *gult* rights were sometimes sold and inherited without the state's involvement — but the basic architecture stands.

Now notice what that is, because the framework of this collection turns on the distinction and the case will turn on it too. *Rist* is not a thing. It is a relation between persons — a man's standing with his ancestors, his kin and his neighbours, which happens to be expressed in access to soil. It cannot be sold because there is nothing to hand over; selling it would be selling one's place in a descent group. *Gult* is not a thing either; it is a relation with a lord, a licence to collect. Neither can be granted to a stranger as an estate without first being converted into something it is not. Any conqueror who wants to seat armed settlers on this kind of ground has a technical problem before he has a military one, and the instrument that solves it is a measurement and a register.

The peasantry in the north also had two things the south would not be given, and they should be stated now because their absence later is the whole of the case. A northern *rist*-holder had a heritable claim that his lord could tax but could not extinguish, and he had access to a court. Whether either amounted to much in a bad year is a question for later. That they existed at all is the boundary line of this entire study.

The book with six names in the back of it

The northern kingdom's account of itself was written down, which is rare and enormously useful, because a written robe can be dated.

The *Kebra Nagast*, the Glory of the Kings, tells how Makeda, queen of the south, went to Solomon in Jerusalem; how she bore him a son, Bayna Lehkem, whom Ethiopia calls Menelik; how that son returned to Jerusalem as a young man and was recognised at sight by everyone who saw him; and how he and the eldest sons of Israel's notables carried off the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia, leaving a wooden copy behind, so that the God of Israel changed his address. The book's own summary of what all this establishes comes at the very end of the last chapter, and it is worth having exactly, in E. A. Wallis Budge's 1922 translation:

Thus hath God made for the King of Ethiopia more glory, and grace, and majesty than for all the other kings of the earth because of the greatness of Zion, the Tabernacle of the Law of God, the heavenly Zion.

That is the claim. It is a claim about precedence among kings, it is addressed to an audience that already grants that the God of Israel is the relevant authority, and it converts a mountain kingdom on the edge of the known world into the senior Christian monarchy on earth. It is also, in its surviving form, a manufactured object, and the manuscript tells you so itself. Most copies carry a colophon, and the colophon is one of the most remarkable documents in this collection because it is a robe describing its own construction.

The colophon says the text came from Coptic into Arabic and then into Ge'ez. It gives the Ge'ez editor's name — Isaac — and asks the reader's indulgence for his prose. It names five colleagues who worked with him: Yamharana-'Ab, Hezba-Krestos, Andrew, Philip and Mahari-'ab. It gives the reason the book had not been rendered into Ge'ez earlier, and the reason is entirely political:

It went out in the days of Zâguâ, and they did not translate it because this book says: Those who reign not being Israelites are transgressors of the Law.

The Zagwe were the dynasty that held the throne before 1270. A book asserting that non-Israelite rulers are lawbreakers could not be published while they ruled, for reasons no one needed to explain. And then the colophon names the man who commissioned it and records what he said:

For I have toiled much for the glory of the country of Ethiopia, and for the going forth of the heavenly Zion, and for the glory of the King of Ethiopia. And I consulted the upright and God-loving governor Yâ'ebîka 'Egzî'ĕ, and he approved and said unto me, 'Work.'

Here is where the position matters more than anything else on the page. Ya'ibika Egzi was not an emperor. He was governor of Enderta, in Tigray, in the reign of Amda Seyon, and the scholarly dating of the Ge'ez production — Conti Rossini, Littmann and Cerulli converged on the window between 1314 and 1321 or 1322 — puts the work squarely in the years when Enderta was pulling away from the crown. The governors of Enderta had been asserting themselves since the Solomonic restoration; Ya'ibika Egzi's predecessor called Enderta his own kingdom in a document of 1305, and Ya'ibika Egzi's own land grant of 1318 or 1319 does not mention the emperor at all. He rebelled, tried to bring the governor of Tembien in with him, was defeated by Amda

Seyon, and was killed; the emperor broke up his titles and gave them to men from distant provinces.

So the founding text of the Solomonic dynasty was commissioned by a provincial magnate in the act of detaching himself from the Solomonic dynasty, and completed under the patronage of a man the dynasty then destroyed. The book outlived its patron by six hundred years in the hands of the family he had been trying to displace. Whatever Ya'ibika Egzi thought he was buying — a claim of his own, a Tigrayan and Aksumite counter-claim against an Amhara court, a standing in the church — what he got was an instrument that the winner picked up off the field and carried until 1974.

Two disciplines have to be held here at once, and holding both is most of what this collection is for.

The first is that none of this makes the belief false in any sense that matters to how it worked. A thing that was built and then became real is a different and far more durable object than a lie. Budge, writing in 1922, recorded that the book "has been held in the highest esteem and honour throughout the length and breadth of Abyssinia for a thousand years at least," and that in his own day it was believed by educated Ethiopians to contain the true history of the origin of their kings. He was writing about a text he himself had dated and dissected, and he saw no contradiction, because there is none. The men who revered the book in 1900 had not commissioned it; they had been raised inside it, as the furniture of the world.

The second discipline is that the belief was not decorative, and there is a piece of evidence for that which is almost too good. In 1868 a British expedition stormed Tewodros's fortress at Maqdala and carried off, among a great mass of manuscripts, two fine copies of the *Kebra Nagast*. On 10 August 1872 Prince Kasa of Tigray — within months to be crowned Yohannes IV — wrote to Earl Granville at the Foreign Office asking for the return of a picture of Christ and of a book, and explained why he wanted the book:

> *Again there is a book called Kivera Negust (i.e. Kebra Nagast), which contains the Law of the whole of Ethiopia, and the names of the Shums (i.e. Chiefs), Churches, and Provinces are in this book. I pray you will find out who has got this book, and send it to me, for in my Country my people will not obey my orders without it.*

An emperor is telling a foreign minister, in writing, in plain terms, that without a particular manuscript his commands are not obeyed. That is not piety and it is not sentiment; it is a statement about the operating conditions of his own authority, made by the man who had to work under them. The Trustees agreed and the manuscript went back on 14 December 1872, with an inscription to that effect on the last folio.

Some thirty years later the French envoy Hugues Le Roux found that inscription still in the book when Menelik II had it fetched from Addis Ababa so that it could be translated into French. Le Roux recorded Menelik's answer to his request, and Budge reproduced it:

> *Je suis d'avis qu'un peuple ne se défend pas seulement avec ses armes, mais avec ses livres. Celui dont vous parlez est la fierté de ce Royaume.*

I hold that a people defends itself not with its arms alone, but with its books. The one you speak of is the pride of this Kingdom. The provenance of that sentence is a chain — Menelik's Amharic, an interpreter, Le Roux's French, Budge's reproduction — and it should be held loosely as a quotation. As evidence of what an emperor thought a book was for, it is exact enough, and it is the whole of this collection's argument about legitimacy spoken by a working practitioner, without embarrassment, to a foreign official. He is not describing a consolation. He is describing an asset in the same breath as his weapons.

The law of the kings, and the bishop who was bought

Two further pieces of the northern apparatus were imported, and the fact that they were imported is not incidental.

The law code was the *Fetha Nagast*, the Law of the Kings, and Ethiopian tradition traced it to the three hundred and eighteen fathers of the Council of Nicaea. It was in fact an Arabic nomocanon compiled around 1238 to 1240 by the Coptic jurist Abu'l-Fada'il ibn al-'Assal, in Egypt, as a practical handbook for Christians living under Muslim rule; it drew on apostolic canons and on Byzantine and Roman law; it was promulgated under Patriarch Cyril III ibn Laqlaq; and it was translated into Ge'ez, by tradition at the order and expense of Emperor Zara Yaqob in the fifteenth century, by a man whose colophon names him as Petros son of Abda Sayd. It is divided into an ecclesiastical half and a secular half, and it was still the reference code of the empire in the nineteenth century. A country whose law of persons, inheritance, property and punishment came from a manual written for a minority community in another country, under another religion's government, two hundred years before it arrived, and was understood there to have descended from a fourth-century council, is a country running a legal fiction of exactly the kind this collection exists to name. The word for that is not fraud. Zara Yaqob wanted a code, there was a good one available, and he had it fetched; the misattribution to Nicaea did the work that misattributions do, which is

to move the authority from a living Egyptian jurist to a dead ecumenical council that could not be argued with.

The church itself was even more remarkable. From the fourth century until the middle of the twentieth, the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church — the *abun* — was a single Egyptian Copt, appointed by the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, at the request of the Ethiopian emperor, and after payment. He was a foreigner who often did not speak the language. He was the only man who could ordain priests, which meant that when the see fell vacant, as it repeatedly did for years at a stretch, the entire sacramental apparatus of the kingdom began to run down. Yohannes IV obtained Abuna Atnatewos II in 1869 from Cyril V of Alexandria; the sum reported in the standard accounts is twenty thousand dollars, a figure that should be treated as a report rather than an audited number. Against the foreign *abun* stood the native *echage*, abbot-general of the great monastery of Debre Libanos and the senior Ethiopian churchman, and the rivalry between the two offices is a permanent feature of the period. The Ethiopian church did not get an Ethiopian head until Abuna Basilios was consecrated on 14 January 1951, and did not become autocephalous until 1959.

Take the revealed preference seriously, because it is one of the sharpest facts in the landscape. Here is a monarchy that held uncontested force within its own highlands, that claimed descent from Solomon and custody of the Ark, and that nevertheless sent embassies and money to a patriarch resident under a Muslim government in another country in order to be given a bishop it could have appointed itself in an afternoon. It paid, repeatedly, across a millennium, for something it did not need militarily and could have taken by fiat. An apex that spends real money on a legitimacy it is not obliged to buy has told you, by the expenditure alone, that some audience required the coin. The audience here was its own clergy and its own faithful, whose understanding of a valid ordination ran through Alexandria and could not be redirected by decree.

Eighty-six years without a king

The order into which Menelik was born had spent most of the previous century not working.

The Solomonic restoration of 1270, which put Yekuno Amlak on the throne in place of the Zagwe, had been followed by three centuries of expansion, then by catastrophe. Between 1529 and 1543 the armies of Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi, called Gragn, the left-handed, came out of Adal, broke the imperial army at Shimbra Kure on 9 March 1529 and overran most of the Christian highlands, burning the churches and the monastic libraries, including the cathedral at Aksum where the emperors were crowned. A Portuguese expedition under Cristóvão da Gama landed in

1541; da Gama was captured and killed; the Imam was killed in February 1543 and the invasion collapsed. What survived was a hollowed kingdom, and into the space came the Oromo expansion, which is the subject of the next section but belongs here too, because it is the same event seen from the other end.

Gondar was founded as a fixed capital by Fasilides in 1636 and the kingdom recovered a form of centre for a century and a half. Then it stopped. The conventional date for the beginning of the *Zemene Mesafint* — the Era of the Princes, or of the Judges, the term taken from the Book of Judges — is 7 May 1769, when Ras Mikael Sehul of Tigray deposed the emperor Iyoas; some historians push the beginning back to 1755 or to the murder of Iyasu I in 1706. For eighty-six years there was an emperor at Gondar and he decided nothing. Real power lay with regional lords, above all the house of Yejju in Wollo — the Wara Sheh — whose regents made and unmade emperors and whose origins were Oromo and, before conversion, Muslim.

That last fact deserves emphasis because it disciplines a great deal of what comes later. The Oromo were not outside the northern order in the nineteenth century; for most of a century they had been running it. The regents of Yejju were Oromo. Court Oromo was spoken at Gondar. The category that mattered in the north was confessional and linguistic — Orthodox, Ge'ez-lettered, Amharic- or Tigrinya-speaking — and it was permeable by conversion and marriage in both directions across many generations. Anyone who reads the conquest that follows as a racial event will find the evidence resisting at every point; anyone who reads it as therefore innocent will find it resisting just as hard, for reasons that will emerge when the terms of the southern settlement are laid out.

The era ended in violence. Kassa Hailu, a border chief from Qwara who had begun as something close to a bandit, won a series of battles from Gur Amba in September 1852 through Ayshal, where he destroyed the power of Yejju, and was crowned Tewodros II on 11 February 1855. He then set about doing by force what nobody had done for a century: reuniting the provinces under one hand, curbing the church's lands, building an artillery, and abolishing the regional lords. He failed at nearly all of it, drove his own nobility into revolt, took European hostages, and shot himself at Maqdala on 13 April 1868 as British troops came over the wall. That expedition took away the manuscripts, and among the boys Tewodros had taken as hostages a decade earlier was an eleven-year-old from Shewa.

Shewa, which was already doing it

Shewa was the southernmost of the Christian provinces and the closest to everything worth having.

A local branch of the Solomonic line had established itself in the Menz highlands around the turn of the eighteenth century, and during the Era of the Princes it did what every other province did — became autonomous — but with a difference: its frontier faced not a rival Christian lord but open country. From Ankober, high on the eastern escarpment, the Shewan kings looked down on the Awash valley and across at the Oromo lands of the Tulama and beyond them the Gurage, the Arsi, and the trade roads running to the Gibe kingdoms and Kaffa.

Under Sahle Selassie, who ruled from 1813 to 1847 and was Menelik's grandfather, Shewa turned that position into a system. He broke the Tulama Oromo in the early 1820s, rebuilt Debre Berhan after an Oromo raid had burned it, planted fortified villages such as Angolalla in Oromo districts, pushed the frontier into Bulga and Karayu and south-east into Arsi and as far as the Gurage country, and from 1843 was raiding beyond the Awash. He also, and this is the part that decides the future, understood exactly what firearms were for. His armoury held a few score guns when he came to power; it held some five hundred by 1840 and roughly double that within a few more years. When he died in 1847 and the Abichu Oromo rose and attacked Ankober, it was the guns in the capital that saved it.

Where the guns came from is the other half of the arithmetic. Shewa sat astride the caravan roads between the south-west and the coast, and it taxed and traded what moved along them, including slaves — captives taken in the raids and captives bought from the Gibe states — which went out towards the Red Sea and paid for what came in. The exchange of people for firearms in the southern marches of the Christian kingdom is documented, uncomfortable and central; it is the mechanism by which a small highland kingdom accumulated a decisive military advantage over its neighbours before any European government had taken the slightest interest in it.

Europeans had begun to appear. The missionaries Carl Wilhelm Isenberg and Johann Ludwig Krapf reached Ankober in 1839 and found a small colony of Greek craftsmen already there. Krapf accompanied the king's expeditions against the Oromo and wrote about them. A British embassy under Major William Cornwallis Harris arrived in 1841, stayed until 1843, negotiated a commercial treaty, and produced three volumes on the kingdom, its court, its campaigns and its slave trade. What all of these men were describing, without quite saying so, was a working conquest engine: a Christian highland state with firearms, a settled-frontier method of fortified villages, a market for captives, and an open south.

Menelik did not invent the southern expansion. He was born into a household that had been running it for thirty years, and he grew up on the accounts of it.

The republic that elected a war-leader, and the kings the war-leaders became

The largest population in this landscape was Oromo, and the order they had brought with them was not a monarchy at all. It is also, and this must be held firmly, not aboriginal — it arrived by conquest over other people, in a movement whose broad outline is as well attested as anything in sixteenth-century Africa.

The principal contemporary source is a Ge'ez text of 1593 by an Ethiopian monk, Bahrey, from Gamo, conventionally titled the *History of the Galla* — *Galla* being the term the Christian kingdom and the Europeans used and which is now rightly regarded as pejorative. Bahrey describes the movement out of the south into the highlands, the age-and-generation organisation of the incomers, and the failure of the Christian kingdom to stop them, and he wrote it as a position paper: his argument was that the Christian population was numerous and better armed but that only a small fraction of it actually fought, and that a general mobilisation was needed. The standard English translation is Beckingham and Huntingford's of 1954 and is in copyright, so it is paraphrased here rather than quoted; the point to hold is that the earliest and most-used account of the Oromo expansion was written by an enemy of it who was arguing for a policy, and that everything downstream of Bahrey — Almeida, Ludolf, and much of what Europe later thought it knew — was drawn from him. A source is not disqualified by having a position. It has to be read with the position visible.

The order that expanded was *gadaa*. Its architecture is well documented for the Borana, Guji, Tulama, Macha, Arsi, Ittu and other groups, and its essentials are these: men are recruited not by age but by generation, following their fathers at a fixed interval; the classes move through a series of grades; and every eight years the class that has reached the ruling grade takes power from the one before it in a formal handover, under a leader called the *abba gadaa*. Law is made and reviewed in a general assembly — the *gumi*, held at fixed places under a sycamore, at the same eight-year rhythm — where any man may speak, and the *abba gadaa* himself can be impeached and removed. Alongside the *gadaa* offices stood the *qaalluu*, the ritual authority, hereditary, the keeper of the relation with Waaqa and the man whose sanction the enterprise required. Warfare had its own office, the *abba dula*, the father of the war, and the *butta* campaigns ran on the same eight-year cycle as everything else, so that expansion was not an emergency but a calendar item.

There is no need to romanticise this and no need to diminish it. It was a genuine and sophisticated constitutional order with rotation, term limits, an assembly, an impeachment procedure and a religious sanction, and it was also the coordinating

machinery of a conquest that displaced and absorbed other peoples across an enormous area within a century. Both statements are true and neither cancels the other.

And then, in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the well-watered Gibe basin in the south-west, the thing every framework in this collection predicts actually happened, in the open, within living memory, in front of witnesses who wrote it down.

Among the Macha Oromo who had settled that country and become cultivators, the war-office stopped rotating. The *abba dula*, whose command was supposed to end with his *gadaa* period, kept it. Bofo, called Abba Gomol, an *abba dula* of Limmu, made himself the founder of a kingdom in the first or second decade of the century after a successful defence against a neighbour; his son, Ibsa Abba Bagibo, ruled Limmu-Ennarea from 1825 to 1861 with a court and a hierarchy of officials, and made Saqqa a great entrepôt on the road between Kaffa and the north. Jimma was consolidated in the 1830s by Abba Jifar I out of a set of separate Jimma groups. Gomma, Guma and Gera followed. Four of the five became Muslim: Abba Bo'ka of Jimma, ruling from about 1858, had mosques built near Jiren, granted land to Muslim scholars and instructed his officials to do the same in their provinces, making Jimma a centre of Islamic learning. The five kingdoms fought one another over the caravan roads, formed leagues against one another and against the *gadaa* Macha beyond them, married their children to seal treaties, and taxed the coffee and the slaves and the ivory that moved through. The word they used for a king, *moti*, had originally denoted the *gadaa*'s war-leader. The office had eaten the constitution that created it.

Herbert Lewis's study of Jimma under Abba Jifar II and Mordechai Abir's work on Limmu-Ennarea are the standard modern reconstructions and both make the same structural point: these monarchies grew out of internal Oromo processes — successful war-leaders, sedentarisation, the revival of the Red Sea trade, the arrival of Muslim merchants from the north — rather than being imposed from outside.

This is the single most useful thing in the landscape, and it disciplines the argument in both directions at once. It refutes any account in which the Oromo south was a stateless zone of undifferentiated peoples awaiting administration. It equally refutes any account in which an egalitarian republic stood intact until northern armies destroyed it, since in the richest and most commercially advanced Oromo country the republic had already been dismantled — by Oromo kings, for reasons of their own, two generations before Menelik's soldiers arrived. And it is a time-lapse film of the proposition this whole collection is built on: that a position of coordination, held by a man who notices what the position permits, tends to become a position of capture. Here that took about one lifetime and there were Europeans in the country taking notes while it happened.

The tato, the kawo and the amir

Beyond and among the Oromo lay states that were not Oromo, and they were not new either.

Kaffa, in the wet forested highlands beyond the Gojeb, was a monarchy of some five centuries' standing. Its own tradition dates the founding of the Minjo dynasty to about 1390 and says plainly that Minjo displaced a previous ruling line, the Mato — a dynasty of which, as the anthropologist Amnon Orent's informants told him, nobody could remember a single name. The king, the *tato*, held a semi-divine standing as the embodiment of the sky god Yero; he was seen only by great officers, eunuchs and his wives, and did not feed himself. He was not, however, an autocrat: he governed with a council of hereditary nobles, the *mikrecho*, whose members were supported by tribute from particular districts, who elected his successor from within the royal clan, and without whose concurrence he could not decide. The kingdom was divided into provinces — twelve at first, eighteen by the nineteenth century — under governors who collected tribute and judged cases, and it had expanded by conquest, annexing the small Gimira states and, in the late eighteenth century, bringing Wolayta under tribute. It had a despised occupational caste, the Manjo, who were assigned the guarding of the royal gates. It had accepted Christianity as a state religion under Sarsa Dengel in the later sixteenth century, built a church at Baha with a *tabot* bearing that emperor's name, and then let the religion lapse as the northern kingdom's reach withdrew.

Wolayta, in the Omo highlands, had a dynastic tradition running back to the thirteenth century in two phases — the Wolaita Malla line and, from about the sixteenth century, the Tigre Malla line, whose founding tradition claims an origin in Tembien in Tigray. That claim deserves a moment: a southern Omotic kingdom legitimating its own dynasty by descent from the far Christian north is precisely the borrowing of an existing prestige, and it shows how permeable the categories were long before anyone conquered anybody. The last king, Kawo Tona Gaga, came to the throne around 1890, married a daughter of Abba Jifar II of Jimma, and refused the tribute his predecessors had paid to Shewa. It should be said on the face of this module that the Wolayta king-lists, their dates, and the scale of the kingdom are contested, that much of the published reconstruction rests on oral tradition collected in the twentieth century, and that some of it is written in an explicitly nationalist register. Where this study needs numbers from Wolayta it will give ranges and name whose numbers they are.

Harar was the eastern anchor and a city-state of a different order altogether: walled, Muslim, literate in Arabic, minting its own coin, and speaking its own Semitic language. Its wall, the Jugol, was built in the 1550s by Amir Nur ibn Mujahid, the nephew who married Gragn's widow on the promise of avenging him — so that the

fortification of Harar is a direct physical residue of the sixteenth-century wars. An independent emirate ran there from 1647. Richard Burton entered the city in disguise in January 1855 and published the first European account of it. And then, twenty years before Menelik reached it, Harar was conquered by somebody else.

In October 1875 an Egyptian force, part of the Khedive Isma'il's push into the Horn, took Harar without resistance and, on 26 October, executed the amir. What the Egyptians then did in the countryside is worth recording in detail, because it is a template this study will meet again from a different direction. They campaigned against the surrounding Oromo in early 1876; they required them to plant grain and coffee; and they appointed thousands of Oromo notables to responsibility for parcels of land, giving them the old Harari titles of *garad* and *malaq*, in return for a fee paid in cattle and a commission to collect a tithe. That is a conquest converting local men into revenue agents by handing them a title, a district and a cut — and it was done in this landscape, on these people, by a Muslim African power, a decade before the Shewan army arrived. The Egyptians withdrew in 1884–85 when the fiscal collapse and the Mahdist rising in Sudan forced them off the coast, and the emirate came back for two years under Amir Abdullahi.

Beyond Harar, in the Ogaden and the eastern lowlands, were the Somali — pastoral, segmentary, mobile, organised by lineage and contract rather than by any office, and holding nothing that a conqueror could sit down in. That distinction, between an order with a seat a stranger can occupy and an order that has never pooled its coordination into one, is going to predict a great deal about how differently the same empire behaved in different districts.

The men on the shore

The coast was filling up while all this was happening.

The Suez Canal opened in 1869, and in the same year the Rubattino shipping company bought the bay of Assab from local Danakil rulers as a coaling station; the Italian state took it over in 1882 and declared it a colony. France had established itself at Obock and would develop Djibouti. Egypt held Massawa and, from 1875, Zeila and Harar, and drove inland — and was destroyed for it at Gundet in November 1875 and at Gura in March 1876 by Yohannes IV. Britain, having occupied Egypt in 1882, brokered the Hewett Treaty of 3 June 1884 by which Ethiopia was promised access through Massawa in return for helping evacuate the Egyptian garrisons from Sudan, and then, in February 1885, stood aside while Italy landed at Massawa and took it. Ras Alula annihilated an Italian column at Dogali in January 1887; Italy answered by raising its strength at Massawa to some twenty thousand men.

Two things came up the escarpment from those beaches and both were decisive. The first was rifles — French, Italian and later Russian, sold to whichever highland ruler had ivory, coffee, gold or captives to pay with, and sold in particular by Italy to Menelik of Shewa at a time when Italy's quarrel was with Yohannes in the north. The second was information, running the other way: consuls, arms dealers, engineers, missionaries and geographers who watched the highlands and reported home, and who would in due course constitute the audience this study is really about.

The boy who came down from Maqdala

Set all of that beside a single man's position in the middle of 1865, because that is where this study starts and because the position explains most of what follows.

Sahle Maryam was born on 17 August 1844, at Ankober by most accounts and at Angolela by others, to Haile Melekot, heir and later king of Shewa, and to Woizero Ejigayehu, a woman of the royal household; the accounts differ on whether his parents were married before or after his birth and agree that his grandfather had him legitimated. He was given, or later took, the name of Menelik, the son of Solomon and the queen of the south — the sources differ on whether it was conferred in infancy by Sahle Selassie or assumed at his accession, and this study will not pretend to settle it. In 1855 Tewodros invaded Shewa; Haile Melekot died in November of that year; and the boy, aged eleven, was taken north to the fortress of Maqdala and kept there for the best part of a decade. He was educated, he was treated as a prince, he married one of Tewodros's daughters, and he watched at close range a man attempt to reunify the empire by force and destroy himself doing it. In 1865 he escaped, abandoning the marriage; Tewodros's reprisals against the hostages left behind were savage. He returned to Shewa, displaced Tewodros's appointed governor, and was proclaimed king.

Now read the position, because it is the whole engine of this case.

He held a province, a dynastic claim, an armoury and a frontier. He did not hold the empire, and after Tewodros's death the imperial title went first to Tekle Giyorgis and then, in 1872, to Kassa of Tigray as Yohannes IV, a man with the north, the church's centre of gravity, and — after Gundet and Gura — the most convincing military record on the plateau. To the south lay a set of kingdoms and confederations, rich, divided, at war with one another, and armed with spears; to the north lay a rival he could not beat and would not be permitted to displace. To the east lay a coast filling with foreigners who would sell him rifles precisely because they were interested in weakening the man to his north.

There is no need to attribute a grand design to anybody. A man in that position, with those materials, weighing what he could see, had one obvious direction to move

in, and it was the direction his grandfather had already been moving in for thirty years. What that movement then became, what it did to the people it reached, what was said about it to Europe and what was not — that is the subject of everything that follows.

Reading the ground against the framework

Four things this landscape establishes, and one of them is a genuine addition.

First, and this is the contribution: a legitimating text can be commissioned by the losing side and inherited by the winner. This collection has consistently treated a robe as manufactured by or for an apex, cut to the currency an audience already honours, and it has argued that the manufacture does not make the belief false. Ethiopia adds a mechanism that none of the previous cases has shown so cleanly. The *Kebra Nagast* was made — with a named editor, five named collaborators and a named patron who told them to work — at the instance of a Tigrayan provincial governor who was in the act of detaching himself from the dynasty the book glorifies, and who was killed for it within a few years by the emperor whose house then took the book and ran it for six centuries. So a robe, once written down, is a transferable asset. It is not tied to its maker, it can be captured on the field like a treasury or a fortress, and it can end up legitimating the destruction of the man who paid for it. That is a specific liability of committing a legitimation to writing, and it cuts against the easy assumption that literacy makes an apex's story more controllable. Writing makes a claim durable, portable and — precisely because it is portable — seizable. Any case in this collection that shows a written founding text should now be asked the same question: who commissioned it, against whom, and did that party keep it?

Second, the recursion here is unusually deep and unusually dated, and it must be held in both directions. Menelik's Ethiopia is a restoration over the Era of the Princes, over Gondar, over the wreckage of Gragn's invasion, over the Solomonic restoration of 1270, over the Zagwe, over Aksum. Its founding book is dated to within a decade. Its law code is a thirteenth-century Egyptian handbook. Its bishop was bought abroad. And the south is layered exactly as thickly: the *gadaa* order was itself laid over earlier populations by a sixteenth-century expansion; Kaffa's own tradition says its dynasty displaced another about 1390; Wolayta's ruling house claimed a northern origin; Jimma was assembled by conquest in the 1830s; Harar's wall is a monument to a sixteenth-century holy war and its countryside had been reorganised for tribute by Egyptian officers in 1876. There is no first innocent order anywhere on this plateau, only earlier builds that took. Naming a conquered origin is not debunking and it is not a licence — it is not a debit against the Oromo or the Kaffa or the Wolayta, and it is not a credit to whoever conquered them last. A thing that was built and

became real is more durable than a lie, and it was as authentically the world of the people who lived in it as any order in this collection.

Third, the settlement instrument was already five hundred years old. From the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Christian kingdom held its conquered provinces by planting *chewa* regiments — standing military colonies, several thousand strong, each supported by a *gult* grant over a defined district — and the chronicles record Zara Yaqob garrisoning the provinces with them after 1445. Sahle Selassie's fortified villages in Tulama country in the 1820s are the same device in miniature. When this study reaches the terms on which the southern conquest was settled, the hypothesis to test first is not that a new colonial instrument was invented in the 1880s but that a medieval one was scaled up — and if that is right, then the interesting question is not where the device came from but what changed when it was applied to populations that were not going to be absorbed the way earlier conquests had been.

Fourth, a warning about the instrument that will bias every module after this one. The archive of this landscape is overwhelmingly northern, Christian, written and interested. The chronicles are court documents. The law code and the epic are church productions. The travellers are Europeans with employers. The single most-used account of the Oromo expansion was written by a hostile monk arguing for mobilisation, and it reaches this study through a translation made in 1954 by men with their own frame; the very name in its title is one no Oromo would now accept. Against that, the southern orders left tribute lists and oral traditions, most of them collected after 1930, and the Gibe kingdoms are known largely through Italian and French travellers who arrived at the moment those kingdoms were being absorbed. This is not a reason to write the south as unknowable. It is a reason to say, every time a figure appears, whose figure it is — and to record that the silences in this record are not absences of events but absences of scribes.

A note on the periodisation, stated for testing rather than adoption. The landscape closes in 1865. The order runs from 1865, when Menelik takes Shewa, and the internal hinges to test are 1878, when he submits to Yohannes IV and accepts a ceiling above him — the moment, on the reading above, that turns him south; 1889, when Yohannes dies at Metemma, Menelik becomes emperor, the Treaty of Wuchale is signed and the great famine is at its height, four events in one year that are not separable; 1896, which is a floor-fact and a diplomatic hinge but not the pivot of the arrangement, since the southern conquest runs straight through it; 1906 to 1916, the succession crisis; 1935 to 1941, to be tested as interruption rather than collapse; and 1974, when the settlement made in the 1890s was legally ended. The proposition to be

argued in due course is that 1889, not 1896, is the centre of this study, and that the reason is fiscal and demographic rather than military.

A note on sources. The exact quotations in this module are all from public-domain texts and are given verbatim. The passage from the last chapter of the *Kebra Nagast* on the glory of the King of Ethiopia, the colophon in full — Isaac's apology for his prose, the five named collaborators, the statement that the book could not be issued under the Zagwe because it condemns non-Israelite rulers, and Ya'ibika Egzi's instruction to work — and Budge's own remark on the book's standing in Abyssinia are from E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek*, London, 1922, and are quoted as Budge printed them, in his transliteration. The letter of Prince Kasa, later Yohannes IV, to Earl Granville of 10 August 1872, and the librarian's note recording the manuscript's return on 14 December 1872, are also as printed by Budge in that volume's introduction. Menelik II's remark on books and arms is Budge's reproduction of Hugues Le Roux, *Chez la Reine de Saba*, Paris, 1914; the chain from Menelik's Amharic through an interpreter through Le Roux's French to Budge is three links long and the wording should be held loosely, though the substance is consistent with Yohannes's letter of forty years earlier.

The dating of the *Kebra Nagast* follows the convergence of Conti Rossini, Littmann and Cerulli on 1314 to 1321–1322 for the Ge'ez production, as reported in the standard reference literature; the colophon's own internal dating is confused — it names a Zagwe king in the same breath as a fourteenth-century one — and Dillmann in the nineteenth century rejected the colophon outright as a scribe's invention, a judgment later scholars have not followed. Ya'ibika Egzi's assertion of autonomy in his land grant of 1318/19, his predecessor's reference to Enderta as his own kingdom in 1305, his revolt and its suppression by Amda Seyon are drawn from the reference literature resting on Taddesse Tamrat's work; that chain has not been checked against the Ge'ez documents and is flagged as this module's second-weakest link. Its weakest is the Wolayta dynastic chronology, where the published accounts diverge on the number and dates of reigns and where several of the available treatments are written to make a present-day argument.

The following are paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited here rather than quoted: Allan Hoben on *rist* and *gult* as complementary rights over the same land rather than two kinds of land; Donald Crummey on Gondarine land documents and the sale and inheritance of *gult*; Richard Caulk on soldiers as predators on the peasantry between about 1850 and 1935; Richard Pankhurst on famine and epidemic in Ethiopia before the twentieth century; Mordechai Abir on the Era of the Princes and on Limmu-Ennarea; Herbert Lewis on Jimma; and Amnon Orent on Kaffa traditions.

Bahrey's *History of the Galla* of 1593 is paraphrased and not quoted, because the standard English translation, Beckingham and Huntingford's of 1954, remains in copyright; readers should note that this study has not consulted the Ge'ez and is relying on the reported content of that translation.

Figures. The sum reported as paid by Yohannes IV to the Coptic Patriarch for Abuna Atnatewos II in 1869 — twenty thousand dollars — appears in the reference literature without an audit trail and is given here as a report. Sahle Selassie's armoury of roughly five hundred firearms by 1840, doubling within a few years, is likewise a reported figure from the standard accounts of Shewa and is consistent with the European visitors' descriptions but is not a return from a register. No population figure has been given for the plateau in this module, and none will be given without a range and an attribution: Ethiopia's first national census was taken in 1984, every nineteenth-century number is a traveller's estimate or a back-projection, and the estimates in circulation for the 1880s differ by a factor that makes them useless for any argument this study needs to make.

MODULE 1

For the King of Kings Alone

The floor of force: what the conquest was actually made of, who supplied it, what it cost to use, and who could not run from it.

The ceiling, and the direction it left open

In March 1878 the king of Shewa knelt to the emperor of Ethiopia and gave up the imperial claim he had been quietly assembling for thirteen years.

Menelik had spent those years doing what any provincial ruler in his position would do. He had rebuilt the Shewan army his father had lost, campaigned repeatedly in Wollo to the north, married into the Wollo houses, corresponded with foreign governments, and behaved in every particular like a candidate for the throne at Gondar. What he ran into was Yohannes IV of Tigray, who had beaten the Egyptians twice in four months at Gundet and Gura, who held the north, and who was not going to be displaced by a Shewan with fewer guns and no victories against a European army. Yohannes marched south. Menelik submitted, and was confirmed as *negus* — king — of Shewa, which is to say that he kept everything he actually held and formally abandoned everything he had hoped to hold.

Read the position rather than the ceremony, because the ceremony is the least interesting thing about it. A submission of this kind is not a surrender; it is a purchase. What Menelik bought was survival, a recognised title, and an end to the northern war he was going to lose. What he gave up was the direction of his ambition. And a man whose ambition has been closed off in one direction and who commands the only substantial army on the southern edge of the Christian highlands does not stop being ambitious. He turns.

Everything in this module follows from that turn, and it is worth being precise about what the turn was not. It was not the discovery of a new idea. Shewan kings had been pushing south for sixty years and Menelik's grandfather had made a system of it. It was not a plan formed in 1878 and executed to a timetable. It was the ordinary response of a man with an army, a frontier, and nowhere else to go — and its speed was set, from that year onward, by exactly one variable, which was how fast he could buy rifles.

Embabo: two vassals racing for the same country

The southern conquest did not begin as a conquest of the south. It began as a race between two of the emperor's own subordinates, licensed and then refereed by the emperor himself, and the fact that it began that way explains more about its shape than anything the conquerors later said about it.

On 20 January 1881, at Debre Tabor, Yohannes IV appointed Ras Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam to be *negus* of Gojjam — and also *negus* of Kaffa, a kingdom several hundred miles away over the Blue Nile which Tekle Haymanot did not hold, had never entered, and would have to take by force. Yohannes gave him some eight thousand rifles to do it with. That is an emperor handing one vassal a title over another man's country and the means to make it good, and he did it while a second vassal, Menelik of Shewa, was already moving into the same country from the other side.

The two men's armies collided before the men did. Ras Gobana Dacche, Menelik's principal commander in the south and himself an Oromo, intercepted a Gojjame force bringing tribute home and made it hand the tribute over. Insults were exchanged between the two kings, and on 6 June 1882 they met at Embabo, near the Guder, in what Harold Marcus describes as a day-long hand-to-hand battle in which both kings fought as ordinary soldiers. Artillery on both sides fired at ten in the morning and was out of action shortly afterwards. Late in the afternoon the Gojjame centre broke; Tekle Haymanot was wounded and taken prisoner. The reported butcher's bill is close to symmetrical — something over nine hundred dead on each side, with well over a thousand wounded on each, and about four thousand Gojjame prisoners and six cannon taken.

Oromo tradition preserves a detail that is too good to leave out and must be flagged as tradition rather than record: that Tekle Haymanot was captured by a slave named Sambato who did not know who he had caught, that Ras Mangasha Atikam recognised the prisoner and bought him for ten Maria Theresa thalers, and that when Gobana saw the captured king he called out a mocking reference to a boast Tekle Haymanot had made before the battle about who would be carrying whose baking-tray home afterwards. Sambato, the story goes, was freed and made a *fitawrari*. Whatever the truth of it, the shape is right: a slave, a purchase price in a foreign silver coin, and a king of Gojjam as the object of both transactions.

Then Yohannes did the thing that matters. He was furious that two of his vassals had gone to war with one another, and he summoned them, and he arbitrated. Menelik was allowed to keep the southern claim, including Kaffa. In exchange he gave up Wollo, which went to Yohannes's own son. The emperor had, in effect, run an auction for the

south among the men beneath him, and settled it by exchanging a frontier for a province.

Hold that, because it is the origin of the whole enterprise and it is not the origin the enterprise later claimed. The south was not opened because a Christian empire recovered lands it had lost to Ahmad Gragn three centuries earlier, though that is what would be said. It was opened because an emperor with two overmighty subordinates needed somewhere to point them, and because pointing them at each other had just produced two thousand corpses at Embabo. A frontier is the cheapest thing an apex can pay a peer with, since it costs the treasury nothing and the payment is collected from strangers. What Yohannes did in 1882 was to convert the southern kingdoms into a currency for managing his own nobility — and Menelik, who won that auction, would spend the next twenty years doing exactly the same thing with his own.

The arithmetic of a rifle

Everything else in this module rests on a technical fact, and the fact is boring and absolute.

A man with a spear and a hide shield, mounted or on foot, has to reach you. Against a matchlock or a smoothbore muzzle-loader firing perhaps two rounds a minute, with a fouling barrel and an effective range under a hundred yards, reaching you is a reasonable proposition, especially in numbers and especially at dawn or in broken ground. Against a breech-loading rifle — the American-designed Remington rolling block, the French Gras of 1874, the Russian-made Berdan, the German Mauser of 1871 — it is not. Those weapons fire a large-calibre metallic cartridge, load from the breech, and can be worked lying down, behind cover, at eight or ten rounds a minute, with lethal accuracy at several hundred yards. A defended position held by a few thousand such rifles cannot be carried by a spear charge across open ground, no matter how brave the men making it or how many of them there are. The result is not a battle in the ordinary sense. It is an execution conducted at a distance, and the casualty ratios in the southern campaigns are what that looks like on paper.

So the whole history of the conquest is a history of a supply curve. Menelik's grandfather had a few score firearms in 1813 and perhaps five hundred by 1840. Menelik himself, at his submission in 1878, had a few thousand at most. By the beginning of 1896 he could put something on the order of a hundred thousand modern rifles and about forty artillery pieces into a single field army, and he had ordered a further hundred thousand rifles and ten million cartridges from Hamburg, an order the German government blocked. Somewhere in the early 1880s the ratio

crossed over, and the date the southern conquest becomes irresistible is the date it crossed.

Where the rifles came from is the part that decides how this study reads.

They came from Europeans, and they came because each European power wanted Menelik pointed at a different enemy. France, established at Obock and then Djibouti, wanted a counterweight to Italy and a route to the interior, and French and Franco-Levantine dealers ran arms up the Danakil road; the poet Arthur Rimbaud, then a trader at Harar, took a caravan of rifles to Menelik in 1886–87 and lost money on it. Russia, whose interest was in an Orthodox monarchy resisting a Catholic one, sent Berdans. Italy, whose quarrel through the 1880s was with Yohannes in the north and not with Menelik in the south, armed Menelik precisely in order to split the Ethiopian throne — five thousand Remingtons under the convention of October 1887, and then very much more.

And in 1889 the arrangement was written into a treaty. The Treaty of Wuchale, signed on 2 May 1889 in Empress Taytu's own fief while Yohannes lay two months dead at Metemma, is remembered for Article XVII, which will be the subject of a later module and is one of the most consequential mistranslations in the history of diplomacy. But Article VI is the article that built the floor, and its Italian text reads:

> *Il commercio delle armi e munizioni da o per l'Etiopia attraverso Massaua sarà libero per il solo Re dei Re di Etiopia. Ogni qualvolta questi vorrà ottenere il passaggio di tali generi dovrà farne regolare domanda alle autorità italiane munita del sigillo reale. Le carovane con carico di armi e munizioni viaggeranno sotto la protezione e con la scorta di soldati italiani fino al confine etiopico.*

The trade in arms and munitions to or from Ethiopia through Massawa shall be free for the King of Kings of Ethiopia alone. Whenever he wishes to obtain the passage of such goods he shall make regular application to the Italian authorities under the royal seal. Caravans loaded with arms and munitions shall travel under the protection and with the escort of Italian soldiers as far as the Ethiopian frontier.

Read that clause slowly, because there is nothing else quite like it in this collection. A European power has granted one African monarch a legal monopoly on the import of modern firearms through the principal port of the region — *per il solo Re dei Re*, for the King of Kings alone — and has undertaken to escort the shipments with its own soldiers to his frontier. Every other ruler in the Horn is, by the same clause, formally disarmed: the emir of Harar, the kings of the Gibe, the *tato* of Kaffa, the *kawo* of Wolayta, the Somali sultans, none of them can lawfully buy a rifle through Massawa, and the power that has just promised to escort Menelik's cartridges will not be

escorting theirs. The clause does not mention them. It does not have to. A monopoly names only its holder.

Wuchale also carried money and matériel in quantity. The figures reported vary and should be given as a range rather than a number: the standard accounts speak of an Italian loan on the order of four hundred thousand Maria Theresa dollars with a matching value in arms, and Britannica's summary gives thirty thousand muskets and twenty-eight cannon. The precise total is less important than the direction of travel. Italy financed and armed the army that destroyed an Italian army at Adwa seven years later, and it did so deliberately, in writing, as a considered policy of dividing Ethiopia.

There is a further clause worth setting beside Article VI, because the two together describe the conquest exactly. Article VII, having guaranteed free movement of traders across the frontier, adds:

> *E' però severamente proibito a gente armata da ambe le parti contraenti di riunirsi in molti od in pochi e passare i rispettivi confini allo scopo di imporsi alle popolazioni e tentare con la forza di procurarsi viveri e bestiame.*

It is however strictly forbidden for armed people of either contracting party to gather in numbers large or small and cross the respective frontiers for the purpose of imposing themselves on the populations and attempting by force to procure themselves food and livestock.

That sentence is a precise description of how an Ethiopian army moved and fed itself. It is prohibited at the Italian frontier and nowhere else. What the treaty forbids to the north is the standing method to the south.

What the army actually was

There was no standing army in any sense a European staff officer would have recognised, and the fact that there was not is the second great structural fact of this module.

An imperial force was an aggregate of provincial contingents brought by their lords — Ras Makonnen from Harar, Ras Mikael from Wollo, Ras Alula and Ras Mengesha from Tigray, Negus Tekle Haymanot from Gojjam, the Shewan commanders under Menelik's own hand — together with the emperor's household troops and the surviving regimental tradition of the medieval *chewa*, professional units settled on granted land. Its size was whatever the lords chose to bring, which is why estimates for Adwa range from seventy-three thousand to over a hundred thousand and why no figure can be exact. Behind the fighting men came a second population of servants,

muleteers, wives, camp women, priests and traders, in numbers that some accounts put as high as the army itself.

The soldier was not paid. He was fed, and he was fed by the country he was standing in. Richard Caulk's study of the relationship between Ethiopian armies and the peasantry between roughly 1850 and 1935 is the standard treatment, and its title — armies as predators — is its argument. A district through which an army passed was expected to provision it, and an army that stayed too long ate the district out. This is the reason campaigns ran between the harvest and the rains, the reason an army dispersed the moment it stopped fighting, and the reason a defender's most effective weapon was to destroy his own food before the enemy reached it. Ammunition was largely the soldier's own affair; Menelik instituted a quartermaster's arrangement, but a man was generally expected to bring his cartridges and collect his brass.

Now put the two facts together, because their combination is the whole economics of this conquest. An army that costs the treasury nothing to maintain in the field is an army whose only real cost is the rifles — and the rifles were being supplied on credit by foreign governments with their own reasons. The result is a conquest that was very nearly free to the man conducting it and ruinously expensive to everyone it walked past, including his own peasantry. Alexander Bulatovich, a Russian guards officer who rode with Ras Wolde Giyorgis into the far south in 1897–98 and whose diary is the only substantial eyewitness account of these campaigns by a third party, made exactly that observation about the expedition he accompanied: that a march which would have cost a European power millions was carried out by the Ethiopians almost for nothing, if one did not count a few hundred men killed and a few thousand cartridges fired. His English translator's wording is in copyright and is paraphrased here; the arithmetic is his.

One further and grimmer point about supply. The Great Famine of 1888–92, which arrived with rinderpest landed at Massawa with Italian cattle in 1887 and killed cattle and people on a scale this study will have to account for at length in due course, coincided exactly with the middle phase of the conquest. Several accounts hold that it worked as a recruiting sergeant: with the oxen dead and the fields unploughed, a man's best remaining prospect was to march south with an army that would feed him from somebody else's granary. Whether the famine drove the conquest, the conquest worsened the famine, or both, is a question this study will have to work out rather than assert, and it will not be settled here. But the entanglement is not speculative. The same years produced the empty north and the full army.

Arsi: the seven years, and the place this study cannot walk past

The Arsi Oromo, on the high plateau south-east of Shewa, held out longer than anyone else in the first phase, and what happened to them is the most politically live question in modern Ethiopian historiography. It has to be handled with the evidence stated and the arguments named, and the reader has to be told plainly which parts rest on what.

The campaigns ran from about 1882 to 1886. The Arsi were numerous, mounted, organised through their *gadaa* structures, and fighting on their own ground, and they beat Shewan columns repeatedly over four years — a run of failures unusual enough in this conquest to be worth stating on its own. Menelik's uncle, Ras Darge Sahle Selassie, was given the command. He established a fortified base at Azule with dug trenches around it, a technique some accounts attribute to French military advice on holding conquered provinces by permanent garrison. On 6 September 1886 the Arsi attacked that position and were destroyed. The date is given as 6 September in most accounts, though at least one recent treatment gives 6 December; the estimates of Arsi dead run from about six thousand to over twelve thousand, and the figure of twelve thousand is given by the Oromo historian Abbas Haji Gnamo, who cites among others the Ethiopianist historian Bahru Zewde. Shewan losses are described as minimal. That is what a spear army does against entrenched breech-loading rifles, and it is the same arithmetic as Chelenqo, Wolayta and Kaffa.

What is said to have followed is called, in Oromo, *harmaa fi harka muraa Anolee* — the cutting of breasts and hands at Anole. The account, as Gnamo gives it in the standard scholarly treatment of the Arsi, is that after Azule the Arsi still resisted; that Ras Darge summoned the Arsi to a place about twenty-five kilometres north of Asella, near where the Arsi had inflicted the heaviest Shewan losses, under the pretext of concluding peace and discussing the future administration; that large numbers came; and that the men had their right hands and the women their breasts cut off, with the *abba gadaa* and those in line to hold office singled out for castration. Gnamo describes it as the worst of the brutalities committed by the Shewan army against the Oromo. A memorial was raised at Hetosa in Arsi on 6 April 2014, at a reported cost of some twenty million birr, and it has become the central symbol of Oromo memory of the conquest.

The evidentiary position must be stated exactly, because the argument turns on it. Gnamo's own formulation is that this is a tragedy on which Ethiopian sources are silent — there is no Ethiopian written record of it. The account rests principally on Arsi oral tradition, collected and set down long afterwards. Some Oromo scholars additionally cite a contemporary eyewitness account by the French Capuchin missionary Martial de

Salviac, who lived among the Oromo during these years and published *Un peuple antique au pays de Ménélik* in Paris in 1901; this study has not been able to consult that text and therefore cannot say what de Salviac wrote, which is a real gap and is flagged as such, because it is the load-bearing link between the oral tradition and a contemporary written source. Against all of this, a body of Ethiopianist writing and a great deal of Ethiopian public opinion holds that the account is exaggerated or unfounded, that the absence of any contemporary Ethiopian record is decisive, and that the monument was raised in 2014 by a ruling party with a political interest in ethnic grievance. Each side accuses the other of bad faith, and the accusations are made in language — denial, fabrication, holocaust denial — that indicates how far this has passed out of the seminar room.

This study will not adjudicate what it cannot check. What it can do is three things.

First, state the range honestly. That the Arsi campaigns were long, that they ended in a massacre at Azule with a casualty ratio of a kind that only firearms produce, and that the subjugation which followed was violent, is not in dispute among serious historians of any position. What is in dispute is the specific event at Anole: its scale, its deliberateness, and in some tellings its occurrence.

Second, note a fact that neither side finds convenient. Mutilation was not an innovation devised for the Oromo. It was in the repertoire of this military and legal culture generally: the taking of trophies from enemy dead, including castration, is attested in northern Ethiopian warfare well before the southern campaigns, and Bulatovich's own account of the empire's judicial practice lists the cutting off of a right hand and a left leg among the penalties for offences against the state. If the Anole tradition describes what happened, it describes an escalation of an existing practice applied at unusual scale and against women; if it does not, the practice still existed and was still available. Either way the structural point survives, and it is not about ethnicity. It is that an army which had won a total technical superiority chose, in the aftermath, to spend some of it on terror rather than on negotiation — and the choice of terror over negotiation is evidence about what the conquerors intended to do with the country afterwards.

Third, follow that evidence where it goes, which is toward the settlement rather than toward the battlefield. Terror is a poor instrument for extracting labour from a people you need working, and a good one for breaking a leadership you intend to replace. If the *abba gadaa* and the men next in line for office were targeted, then what was being destroyed was not an army — the army had already been destroyed at Azule — but a constitution: the rotating office-holding structure through which the Arsi governed themselves and would have had to be governed. That is a decision about who

would hold authority in Arsi afterwards, taken on the ground in 1886, and this study will meet its consequences when it comes to the terms on which the south was settled.

Chelenqo, and the offer made before the battle

The taking of Harar in January 1887 is the cleanest illustration in the whole conquest of how the floor actually worked, because most of the work was done before a shot was fired.

Menelik wanted Harar for reasons that were entirely explicit. It sat on the road from the French and British Somali ports to the highlands — the road his rifles came up. Amir Abdullahi, who had recovered the city after the Egyptian withdrawal, had begun blocking the passage of arms through his territory. A Shewan force under Menelik's general had already been beaten by the Hararis at Hirna in late 1886. The murder of an Italian party under Count Pietro Porro in April 1886, blamed on the emir, supplied a public reason.

Then, in January 1887, Menelik made an offer. He proposed to the emir the same terms Abba Jifar II of Jimma had accepted five years earlier: submit, pay tribute, and keep the throne and the internal government of your own country. The emir refused, and attacked at dawn on Ethiopian Christmas, expecting the Shewans to be sleeping off the feast. They were not. The engagement at Chelenqo — dated 6 January 1887 in most accounts and 9 January in some — put perhaps twenty to twenty-five thousand Shewan troops with modern rifles against three to four thousand Hararis with obsolete matchlocks and a few cannon. Shewan losses are given as around a hundred dead and six or seven hundred wounded; Harari dead at about a thousand. Ras Makonnen led the troops that took the emir's guns. The emir fled to the Ogaden. Harar was entered, the great mosque was converted to a church, and Makonnen was installed as governor, a post he held until his death in 1906. The French traveller Jules Borelli recorded that the city was plundered by the soldiery and that half its population fled, and that appeals to Makonnen were made in vain. Harari tradition remembers three hundred Qur'anic memorisers and seven hundred newly married men killed, and Harari grooms are still given a cloth called *satti baqla* — seven hundred — at their weddings.

The published offer is the point. Submit and keep your throne under tribute; resist and lose everything. Jimma took it in 1882 and kept its dynasty, its internal law and a large measure of its revenue until Abba Jifar II died in 1932. Harar refused and lost its emirate, its mosque and a large part of its population. Wolayta refused and Kaffa refused, and this study will come to both. Because the terms were known in advance across the whole region, most of the conquest never had to be fought at all: a great many rulers submitted on hearing the terms, and the empire acquired them at no

military cost whatever. That is the cheapest instrument in the entire operation, and it means the settlement's own schedule — who kept a third of his revenue and who kept nothing — is also a record of who fought. The ledger doubles as a casualty list.

The last two kingdoms

Wolayta, in the Omo highlands, had refused tribute under Kawo Tona Gaga and had beaten Shewan columns repeatedly across several years. In December 1894 Menelik went in person, with the great commanders, and after a fortnight of fighting the kingdom was broken and Tona was wounded and captured. The accounts diverge on what happened to him afterwards — some hold he was executed, others that he was taken to Addis Ababa and later allowed to live as a figurehead — and the divergence is itself a caution about the reliability of the whole Wolayta record. Bahru Zewde describes the campaign as among the bloodiest Menelik fought. The casualty figures in circulation are extreme, and one that recurs in the literature is around a hundred and eighteen thousand Wolayta dead and wounded; this study cannot trace that figure to a source it can check and reports it as a figure in circulation rather than a finding. What is not in dispute is that large numbers of captives and enormous quantities of cattle were taken.

Kaffa held out longest and its defence tells you most. In January 1897 Menelik sent three armies — under Ras Wolde Giyorgis, who had already been appointed governor of the kingdom he was being sent to take, and Dejazmach Tessema Nadew and Dejazmach Demissew Nassibu — supported by a contingent from Abba Jifar II of Jimma, who was now fighting for the empire against his neighbours. Wolde Giyorgis attacked from Konta to the south-east, avoiding the strongly fortified Gojeb frontier. The capital at Andaraccha fell in March. And Gaki Sherocho, the last *tato*, did the only thing a defender could do against an army that carried no supplies: he ordered the grain and the houses of his own kingdom destroyed, so that the invaders could not feed themselves. It failed, and it tells you exactly where the vulnerability of an Ethiopian army lay and how completely the Kaffa understood it. He was hunted through his own hinterland for six months, taken on 10 September 1897, and brought before Menelik in silver chains. He died in Addis Ababa in 1919.

Then the armies kept going, for a reason that had nothing to do with Kaffa. Before taking up his governorship Wolde Giyorgis was ordered south to the second parallel of north latitude to forestall British and French claims, and on 29 March 1898 he planted the Ethiopian flag on both shores of Lake Rudolf. Bulatovich rode with that column and recorded the exchange when the Ras's Maasai interpreter called across a river to the Turkana to come and submit, and they answered that they did not know who he was.

That is the far end of the conquest: an African empire racing European empires to plant a flag on a lake it had no intention of administering, in front of a Russian officer taking notes.

Adwa, and what a victory bought

On 1 March 1896, at Adwa in Tigray, the floor was turned around and used northward.

The sequence was short. Menelik denounced the Italian reading of Wuchale, Italy invaded, and in September 1895 Menelik issued an *awaj* — the formal proclamation, cried through the country by heralds with the great drum — calling the whole population to arms. This study has not been able to verify a text of that proclamation and therefore does not quote one, which is a gap worth naming, because the mobilisation order is the single document that would show most clearly what the emperor thought he was asking for and from whom. What it produced is not in doubt. Ras Makonnen's Harar army, raised in a province conquered nine years earlier, led the advance and destroyed Major Toselli's force at Amba Alagi on 7 December 1895; Mekelle was invested; and on 1 March somewhere between seventy-three thousand and over a hundred thousand Ethiopians, carrying on the order of a hundred thousand modern rifles and some forty guns, met an Italian force of about fourteen and a half to seventeen and a half thousand advancing in three separated columns over ground its commanders had not reconnoitred. Around six thousand Italians and Italian-officered ascari were killed and nearly four thousand taken prisoner; Ethiopian dead are given at between about three thousand nine hundred and seven thousand. The Treaty of Addis Ababa of 23 October 1896 abrogated Wuchale and recognised Ethiopian independence without qualification.

Three things should be said about Adwa and this study will keep all three.

The first is that it was a real and complete military victory won by an African state over a European one in a set-piece battle, that it is the only such event of the period, and that nothing in this collection's method requires or permits diminishing it.

The second is that it was the same floor. The rifles that broke the Italian columns were the rifles that had broken the Arsi at Azule, the Hararis at Chelenqo, the Wolayta and the Kaffa. The commanders were the men who had taken the southern kingdoms. The Harar contingent that opened the campaign existed because Harar had been conquered. And the ivory, the gold from Wollega, the coffee, the cattle and the captives taken in the south had helped pay for the imports. The victory that preserved Ethiopian independence was funded, in part, by the subjugation of Ethiopia's own southern peoples. That sentence is not an accusation and it is not a defence; it is an

accounting identity, and both the heroic reading of Adwa and the colonial reading of the southern conquest have to be built on top of it rather than around it.

The third is what the victory actually purchased, which was not territory and not security. Italy kept Eritrea. Menelik did not drive to the sea, though for some weeks he could have tried. What he took was a piece of paper acknowledging that he was a sovereign, and in the following years the acknowledgement was converted into boundary treaties with Britain, France and Italy that fixed the shape of the country. The payoff of the greatest African military victory of the century was diplomatic recognition — which tells you, before this study has argued it, who the audience was.

Who could not run

The last question this module owes is the one the framework always asks of a floor: what made the governed capturable? Why did the conquered not simply disperse?

The answer is not one answer, and the variation within it is a finding.

The plough peasant of the north and the ensete cultivator of the south-west were both, in different ways, fixed to the ground. Grain agriculture on terraced highland fields ties a household to prepared land and a pair of oxen. Ensete ties it to something harder to abandon still: a perennial grove that takes four to seven years to come into use, cannot be carried, and represents the accumulated labour of years. A man can walk away from a field and plant another next season. He cannot walk away from an ensete grove and eat that year. The densest and richest populations of the south-west were therefore the least mobile in the empire, and they were also the ones with the most worth taking.

The organised southern kingdoms were fixed by their own institutions. Kaffa had a fortified frontier of ditches and hedges along the Gojeb, which channelled attack and also anchored the defenders; it had a capital, a court, provincial governors and a tribute system, all of which are things a conqueror can capture and none of which can run. The Gibe kingdoms had capitals, mosques, markets and caravan roads. Harar had a wall. Everything that had made these states rich and governable made them takeable, and this is a general proposition about conquest rather than a fact about Ethiopia: the apparatus that lets a state collect from its own people is the apparatus that lets a stranger collect from them.

And where those conditions did not hold, the conquest did not hold either. The Somali of the Ogaden, the Afar of the Danakil, the Borana and the Turkana had herds instead of fields, no capital worth seizing, no throne a stranger could sit in, and a landscape in which an army could not follow them without dying of thirst. They were raided, taxed at wells and caravan halts, and nominally included within lines drawn on

European maps, and they were not administered. The empire's writ in those lowlands remained, for decades, a matter of periodic punitive columns.

This refines something the corpus had established from a different case. The finding there was that exit is a property of the destination rather than of the terrain — that people do not leave, even across open country, when there is nowhere to arrive. Ethiopia adds that exit is also a property of the crop. A pastoralist's wealth walks with him and his destination is wherever the grass is; an ensete cultivator's wealth is a grove that took seven years and will not move. Two populations forty miles apart, under the same emperor, faced completely different arithmetic, and the empire's grip on each was exactly as tight as the arithmetic allowed. And it should be noted that in these same decades genuine destinations were appearing on the frontiers — British East Africa, Italian Somaliland, the Sudan — which will make the question of who actually left, and from where, a real test later in this study rather than a rhetorical one.

Reading the floor against the framework

Three contributions, and the first is the substantial one.

A floor can be rented from the enemy's rivals, and written into treaty as a monopoly. This collection has treated the floor as something an apex builds from his own resources or captures from a predecessor. Menelik did neither. He obtained the decisive military technology on credit from three European governments in succession, each of which supplied him in order to point him at a different opponent — France at Italy, Russia at Catholic Italy, Italy at Yohannes — and in 1889 he had the arrangement formalised in an instrument whose sixth article reserved the arms trade through the region's principal port to himself alone and put Italian soldiers on the escort. The condition that makes this possible is narrow and namable: a competitive market of external suppliers, none of whom can yet reach the interior, each of whom values the recipient's position in a quarrel with the others. Where that condition holds, a ruler with no industry, no navy and no money can acquire a decisive floor by selling nothing but his own strategic position — and can simultaneously have his neighbours disarmed by the same document, without their being consulted or even mentioned. **A monopoly names only its holder; the disarmament of everyone else is performed by the silence.** This is why the other polities of the Horn lost, and it was not because they were less capable, less organised or less brave. Kaffa had a five-hundred-year-old state and Harar had a wall built in the 1550s. Neither had a European rivalry to sell.

The frontier is a currency for paying peers, and the conquest began as an internal auction. Yohannes IV made a vassal *negus* of a kingdom that vassal did not hold, armed him with eight thousand rifles to go and take it, and then adjudicated

between him and the rival vassal who got there first — trading the whole southern claim for a northern province. The south was opened as a way of managing an elite that could not be commanded. This is the Export solution running inward: not surplus claimants sent to a frontier to keep them out of trouble at home, but a frontier handed to existing overmighty peers as the payment that keeps them from fighting each other and the centre. Where the corpus has seen frontier expansion discharging pressure from a claimant class, this case shows it discharging pressure from a coordinating class already seated — and it predicts, before the evidence is in, that the spoils of the conquest will have to be distributed upward and outward to those same peers rather than retained at the centre.

Publishing the terms of submission is the cheapest instrument in a conquest. Submit and keep the throne under tribute; resist and lose everything. The offer was made to Harar in so many words in January 1887, it had been taken by Jimma in 1882, and it was understood across the region. It converts a military problem into an arithmetic problem for every ruler in front of the advance, and it meant that most of the territory was acquired without fighting. It also has a consequence the conquerors will not have intended and the historian should not miss: because the terms were graduated by conduct, the settlement's schedule permanently records which peoples fought. A ledger of who kept a third and who kept nothing is a map of resistance, preserved in the tax rolls by the men who wrote them.

Weakest evidence in this module, stated on its face. The Anole account rests on oral tradition, is denied by a substantial body of opinion, and the contemporary missionary source most often cited in its support has not been consulted here. The Wolayta casualty figure of around a hundred and eighteen thousand cannot be traced to a checkable source and is reported only as a figure in circulation; the accounts even disagree on whether Kawo Tona was executed or spared. The Wuchale arms and money figures vary between the standard accounts. No text of the September 1895 mobilisation proclamation has been verified, and its absence is a real hole in the reconstruction of how this army was raised. And the reader should hold throughout that the best eyewitness to the southern campaigns, Bulatovich, was a guest of the conqueror, admired the Ethiopian military intensely, and believed that Ethiopian conquest was preferable for the conquered to European conquest — a position that shaped what he thought worth recording.

A note on sources. The clauses of the Treaty of Wuchale quoted above — Article VI on the arms monopoly and Italian escort, and the second paragraph of Article VII forbidding armed parties to cross the frontier to impose themselves on populations and procure food and livestock by force — are given verbatim from the Italian text of the

treaty as published in the Italian official collection following ratification on 29 September 1889, with translations made here. The Italian and Amharic texts of this treaty do not agree, a matter that is the subject of a later module and does not bear on the two articles used here.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Harold Marcus on Embabo and on Menelik generally; Richard Caulk on the relationship between soldiers and peasants; Bahru Zewde on the Wolayta campaign and on the casualty figure at Azule; Abbas Haji Gnamo on the Arsi campaigns and on Anole; Mohammed Hassen on the pattern of devastation in the conquered areas; Richard Pankhurst on the famine of 1888–92. Alexander Bulatovich's *From Entotto to the River Baro* (St Petersburg, 1897) and *With the Armies of Menelik II* (1900) are paraphrased and not quoted, because the only English translation, Richard Seltzer's, is in copyright; the Russian originals have not been consulted. Martial de Salviac, *Un peuple antique au pays de Ménélik* (Paris, 1901), has not been consulted and nothing is attributed to it here beyond the fact that others cite it.

Figures, all given as ranges or as reported. Menelik's rifle strength in 1896 is given in the standard accounts as on the order of a hundred to a hundred and ten thousand, with about forty guns, and the blocked Hamburg order of a further hundred thousand rifles and ten million cartridges is likewise reported rather than documented here. Adwa strengths are given as seventy-three thousand to over a hundred thousand Ethiopians against fourteen thousand five hundred to seventeen thousand seven hundred and seventy Italians and ascari, with Italian dead around six thousand and three thousand eight hundred and sixty-five captured, and Ethiopian dead between three thousand eight hundred and eighty-six and seven thousand. Azule's Arsi dead are given at six to twelve thousand. Chelenqo's figures — twenty to twenty-five thousand Shewans against three to four thousand Hararis, with about a hundred Shewan and about a thousand Harari dead — come from the standard accounts and no muster roll survives for either side. Embabo's reported casualties are close enough to symmetrical on both sides to invite suspicion of a tidied record. The Italian loan under Wuchale is reported at around four hundred thousand Maria Theresa dollars with a matching value in arms, and separately as thirty thousand muskets and twenty-eight cannon; the two figures may describe the same transaction differently and this study cannot reconcile them.

MODULE 2

The Rope and the Third

The settlement: what the conquest found on the ground, what it converted that ground into, who received the two-thirds and who kept the one-third, and what each of them owed for it.

What the rope found

A conqueror who intends to seat armed men on conquered land has a problem before he has a garrison, and it is not a military problem. He has to have something to give them.

In the countries Menelik's armies took between 1882 and 1900 there was almost nothing that could be given. Among the Macha Oromo of the Gibe and the highlands west of Shewa, land was held under *qabiyyee* — a claim founded on first clearing and maintained by use and by standing within a lineage, worked in common by kin and administered by elders, extensive rather than bounded, and not a thing anyone could hand over because there was nobody with the standing to hand it. Among the Arsi the *gadaa* structures allocated grazing and cultivation through generation-sets and assemblies. In Kaffa the theory was the opposite and the practical result identical: all territory was the *tato*'s, held from him through a hierarchy of eighteen provincial governors and their district chiefs, so that a Kaffa cultivator's claim was a claim on an office-holder who held from a semi-divine king, and there was no parcel in it to be transferred. In Wolayta and among the Sidama and Gedeo the arrangements differed again and shared the same essential shape. Everywhere the same thing was true and it is the fact this module turns on: **land in the south was not a thing. It was a relation between persons — kinship, clearing, standing, office — that happened to be expressed as access to soil, which is exactly why none of it could be sold and none of it could be granted.**

So the settlement's first act could not be a division of the spoils, because there were no spoils in a transferable form. Something had to be done to the country first. What was done to it was that a rope was dragged across it.

The rope

The instrument was the *qalad* — in Amharic, a rope — and the unit it produced was the *gasha*, conventionally reckoned at about forty hectares, though the reckoning was never as tidy as that suggests. Land was graded as it was measured: *lam* for

developed and cultivated ground, *lam-taf* for the semi-fertile, *taf* for the uncultivated, with the notional gasha larger on poorer grades. Teams of measurers, with clerks, worked district by district over decades — the operation began in Shewa in the 1880s and was still being extended into parts of the south in the reign of Menelik's successors, and it was never completed everywhere.

Notice what the rope does. Before it passes, a district contains kin groups, elders, clearing rights, grazing agreements, an ancestral claim and a lineage memory. After it passes, the same district contains a number of gashas. Nothing in the soil has changed and nothing in the crops has changed; what has changed is that the country has been made countable, and a countable thing can be written in a column beside a man's name. Karl Polanyi's term for this general operation — treating as a commodity something that was never produced for sale and whose human meaning is bound up in kinship and creed — is the fictitious commodity, and the imposition of it on a society that did not hold land that way is not a technical reform but a social revolution. In this case the revolution was performed by surveyors.

And here is the first thing this module has to report, because it is the study's organising question arriving early and answering itself.

There was no statute. This study has looked for the instrument and has not found it, and states that as a finding open to correction rather than as a certainty. There is no Ethiopian ordinance declaring the southern lands Crown land, or waste, or unoccupied. There is no act converting collective holdings into individual alienable shares. There is no charter granting the *neftenya* estates of which they were declared already to be in possession. There is no clause providing which text prevails, because there is only one text and mostly there is no text at all. What there is, is a rope, a clerk, a schedule of ranks, an appointment made by word, and a claim about the fourteenth century.

Set that beside the conquests in this collection that had a distant public to answer to and the contrast is total. Kenya required Crown Lands Ordinances redefining Crown land to include African-occupied land and extending settler leases to nine hundred and ninety-nine years. Algeria required a *sénatus-consulte* of 22 April 1863 and the *loi Warnier* of 26 July 1873 to dissolve collective *arch* tenure into saleable individual shares. Buganda required an Agreement of 1900 granting a thousand chiefs eight square miles apiece as the estates of which they were already in possession. Each of those instruments is elaborate, each is drafted by lawyers, each was defended in a metropolitan legislature, and each performs by legislation exactly what the *qalad* performed by measurement. The elaboration was never for the benefit of the conquered, who in every case described the transaction accurately and sometimes went

to war over it. It was for the benefit of a home public whose belief that its government proceeded by law was the cheap foundation the whole expensive apparatus rested on.

Menelik had no such public. He had an army, a nobility, a church and a set of European legations. Two of those needed a story and none of them needed a statute. So the conversion of a country into gashas was carried out as an administrative operation rather than a legislative one, and the historian who goes looking for the founding legal fiction of the Ethiopian south will find that it does not exist and that the settlement worked perfectly well without it.

Two thirds and one third

The division that followed had a name and a proportion, and both were borrowed from the north.

The principle was *sisso* — a third. In the territories taken by force, two-thirds of the measured land was appropriated by the state and distributed, and one-third was left at the disposal of the local ruler or notable, who was confirmed in office as *balabbat*. The word means, roughly, one who has a father — a man with a lineage, which is to say a man whose authority over his neighbours predates the conquerors and can therefore be borrowed rather than manufactured. In some districts the proportions ran further against the local holders and something nearer three-quarters was taken; the figure varied with how hard the district had fought.

The *balabbat*'s third was real. He redistributed it, he drew tribute and labour from it, his own house was built and his fences maintained by the men who held under him, and his office descended to his son. Several of the men appointed were the same men who had ruled before, and this is the settlement's cheapest single feature: the empire acquired, at no cost, a layer of intermediaries who already possessed the standing to be obeyed and who now held that standing from the conqueror. The historian looking for the moment the conquest became durable will find it here rather than on any battlefield. Nothing visible changed for a *balabbat* — same man, same district, same neighbours, in many cases the same house. But before the conquest his authority came from below and beside him, from his own people; afterwards it came from an appointment the emperor could revoke and a third that the emperor had defined. **Same ground, different source — and the source is the tie.** He would defend the arrangement because the arrangement was now what made his standing his, and he required no instruction and need not have approved of anybody.

Above the *balabbat*, and this is the part the term "third" conceals, the two-thirds was not a single block. It was carved into categories that a northerner would have recognised instantly, because they were the northern categories carried south: *maderia*,

land granted in lieu of a salary to an official or soldier and in principle revocable; *gult* and *rist-gult*, tribute rights granted to great men and to the church; *samon*, church land, which was extensive and permanent; *hudad* and *mad bet*, demesne worked directly for a lord's or the state's own household; and *mengist*, state land. Ras Gobana is reported to have ordered that two gashas out of every *melkegna*'s holding in every district go to priests, deacons and *debtera* for their services. The church was not an afterthought in this settlement. It was a shareholder from the first survey.

The other schedule, which is the real one

Land was allocated by rank, and the schedule of allocations survives in the scholarly literature in two forms. It is essential to look at both, because the difference between them is the whole character of this settlement.

The first schedule is in land. John Markakis's figures, widely reproduced, give an ordinary soldier one to three gashas, a captain of fifty up to five, a commander of three hundred up to twenty; other accounts give a governor a thousand gashas and scale downward through the military titles.

The second schedule is in people. A *ras* or *dejazmach* might be assigned a thousand *gabbar*; a sub-governor two or three hundred; a *fitawrari* three hundred; a *qegnazmach* a hundred and fifty; and ordinary soldiers twenty, fifteen or ten, according to rank.

Those are not two ways of saying the same thing, and the second is the operative one. **The unit of account in the settlement of the Ethiopian south was the household, not the acre.** A man was not given a farm and left to find labour for it; he was given a stated number of cultivating families, by name and by hearth, who were now obliged to him. The land was the container in which the households came. This is why the settlers who arrived from the north and were offered measured land sometimes declined it, holding out in the hope of being assigned *gabbar* instead — a detail Charles McClellan draws out of the record and one that tells you exactly what was understood to be valuable.

Compare that with the settlements in this collection that had a metropole. There, the conqueror grants land and then faces a second problem — that the people on it will not work for him, because they can feed themselves — and solves it by imposing a tax payable only in a currency the household does not hold, which sends the household out to earn coin on the conqueror's farm or in his mine. No law compels labour. The compulsion has been relocated out of the statute book and into the arithmetic of the household, where a reader in the metropole cannot see it. Ethiopia performs no such manoeuvre, and the reason it performs none is that it does not need one. **The disguise**

is a function of the audience, not of the appetite. Where nobody is going to read the instrument, the obligation can simply be stated: this man owes you three days a week.

What a gabbar owed

The word *gabbar* is old and northern. It comes from *gibr*, tribute, and in the north it meant a tribute-paying peasant — a man who owed a share of his harvest to whoever held the *gult* over his district, and who nevertheless held his own land by inherited claim that the *gult*-holder could tax but not extinguish. Carried south, the word kept its form and lost its floor. A southern *gabbar* owed what a northern one owed and had nothing corresponding to *rist* underneath it.

The obligations, as the literature reconstructs them, ran roughly as follows, and the figures should be read as a range across a very large and varied territory rather than as a tariff. Labour of two to three days a week for the *neftenya* and for the officials — ploughing, sowing, harvesting, building his house, cutting and setting his fence, fetching his firewood and water, grinding his grain, herding his cattle. A share of the harvest given by Michael Stahl at between a third and a half, and by some accounts, in the worst districts and the worst decades, considerably more. Beyond the share, a stream of particular renders: chickens, eggs, honey, butter, sheep and beer for the lord's table at the great festivals. Porterage — the carrying of loads to a granary or to a lord's distant holding, at whatever moment the lord required it, which in practice frequently meant at harvest. Later, road work. And the obligation did not lapse with the man it was owed to: a *gabbar* household continued to serve the *neftenya*'s family after the *neftenya*'s death.

Two things about this deserve to be said plainly.

The first is that nobody in the system was paid in money. Not the soldier, not the official, not the governor, and not the *balabbat*. The empire's answer to the problem of remunerating an administration and an army without a treasury was to stop trying and to assign people instead. That is not a peculiarity of the south; it is the northern *gult* arrangement, which had paid the medieval regiments the same way, applied to a conquered population that had no *rist* to protect it. The whole apparatus of the conquered south — the garrison, the governor, the clerk, the priest and the church — was carried on the backs of the cultivators directly, without passing through a budget, a currency or an account.

The second is what that does to the ceiling on extraction. Where a state taxes through a treasury it can, in principle, see what it is taking and moderate it. Where it assigns households to individuals, the rate is set by the individual, in the district, with a rifle, and the only ceiling is what the household can survive. McClellan's summary of

the Sidama case, drawn from testimony he collected, describes settlers with nothing to do but drink while the local people built the houses, worked the fields and herded the cattle, in a condition he characterises as practically slavery. That is one district and one historian and it should be held as such. But the structural point does not depend on any single description: a payment system that hands men to men, with no intervening account, has removed every mechanism by which a centre could know what was being taken, still less limit it.

There is also a detail from a district study in Sululta, in Shewa, that is worth recording precisely because of how small and how revealing it is: after the measurement, the state appropriated the land and then sold it back to the men who had been farming it, at low prices, so that the former holders bought their own ground from the government. That is one district and one thesis and it should not be generalised. But it is a very exact picture of what a rope does: it makes a thing, the thing has an owner, the owner is the state, and the man standing on it is now a purchaser.

Three settlements, not one

The empire did not do the same thing everywhere, and the variation is not random. It tracks, almost perfectly, what each district did when the army arrived — which means the settlement's own schedule is a record of the resistance.

Where a ruler submitted before being attacked, he was confirmed in his kingdom under a fixed annual tribute — *qurt gibr*, cut tribute — and kept his throne, his court, his law and his religion. Abba Jifar II of Jimma took those terms in 1882 after watching Gojjam's army destroyed at Embabo, paid annually in cash and ivory, kept his Muslim kingdom, sent his own troops to help Menelik conquer Kaffa in 1897, and outlived his suzerain by nineteen years; Jimma was not directly annexed until 1932. Kumsa Moroda of Leqa Naqamte in Wollega submitted, was baptised as Gabra Egziabher, was made *dejazmach*, and kept his country. Jote Tullu of Leqa Qellam did likewise. In these territories there was no measurement, no *neftenya*, no assignment of households, and comparatively little dislocation.

Where a ruler resisted and was beaten, the full apparatus descended: measurement, two-thirds appropriated, garrison towns planted, households assigned, and the ruling house destroyed or exiled. Arsi, Harar, Wolayta and Kaffa are the cases. Harar's emir fled to the Ogaden and the great mosque became a church; Kaffa's *tato* was brought to Addis Ababa in silver chains; Wolayta's *kawo* was taken in the field.

And in the third category — the lowland and frontier zones, the Ogaden, the Danakil, the far south — there was neither measurement nor garrison in any sustained

sense, only periodic columns, tolls at wells and caravan halts, and a line on a European map.

This is the sharpest single fact in the module and it should not be blurred: **the terms were graduated by conduct, and they were published in advance.** Every ruler in the path of the advance knew what submission bought and what resistance cost, because Jimma's case was known across the region and because Menelik put the offer in writing — his letter to Amir Abdullahi of Harar in 1886 or 1887 is reported to have told the emir that Harar had been an Ethiopian province for four hundred years, that the administration must be restored and the annual land tax paid as in former times, and that if he submitted peacefully he would have the autonomy granted to Abba Jifar of Jimma. This study has not been able to verify a text of that letter and reports its content as it is reported in the literature. The structure of the offer, however, is not in doubt, because the settlement's own arithmetic records it. A third and a throne for those who submitted; nothing for those who fought.

The consequence is that a map of *qurt gibr* territories against *gabbar* territories is a map of who resisted, drawn by the conquerors themselves, and preserved in the tax rolls for eighty years. This collection has observed before that a settlement's schedule is the order's real constitution. Here it is also a casualty list.

What it was called

No conquest calls itself a conquest, and this one had an unusually good alternative available.

The Amharic term used for the enterprise, *agar maqnat*, does not mean conquest. It carries the sense of bringing a country under, of subjecting or subduing territory — and, crucially, the framing that ran alongside it in every official mouth was not acquisition but return. The southern lands were not being taken; they were being recovered. Amda Seyon had campaigned in Damot, Hadiya and Bali in the 1310s and 1330s. Sarsa Dengel had persuaded Kaffa to accept Christianity in the sixteenth century and there was a church at Baha with a *tabot* bearing his name to prove it. Then Ahmad Gragn had come out of Adal in 1529 and burned the whole of it, and the Oromo expansion had washed over what was left, and for three hundred years the Christian empire had been too weak to hold what was rightfully its own. Now it was strong again. Harar had been an Ethiopian province for four hundred years; the land tax must be paid as in former times.

Judged as history this is partly true, which is what makes it work. Amda Seyon's campaigns happened. The church at Baha existed. Gragn's devastation was real and its memory in the highlands was not manufactured. What the account does is to convert a

set of fourteenth-century tributary raids and a sixteenth-century Christian outpost into a continuous title, and then to treat three hundred years of other people living, farming, worshipping, governing themselves and building kingdoms on that ground as an interruption in a possession rather than a possession of their own.

And here is the point the framework needs. **That is a fiction, and it does the same work as a statute, and it costs nothing to produce.** It requires no draftsman, no register, no legislature, no category invented for the purpose. It requires only a chronicle tradition, which the northern kingdom had in abundance, and an audience that already accepted the chronicle's authority, which the northern nobility and the church already did. It is aimed inward and upward — at the Ethiopian coordinating class whose belief the enterprise actually needed — and not outward at any auditor.

Set it beside the fictions the corpus has catalogued and its distinctness is clear. **Vacancy** declares the land empty and is reached for by a conqueror who wants the ground and has settlers to put on it; it needs a Lockean warrant and an ordinance. **Recognition** declares that the grantee already owns what he is being given and is reached for to bind an elite; it needs an agreement and a schedule of grants. **Divisibility** declares a collective holding partible and is reached for where the country is visibly full of people visibly farming it; it needs a statute and produces dispossession by ordinary contract. All three are legal fictions, and all three require a lawyer, because all three were performed in front of a public that had to be shown that the thing was lawful.

Ethiopia's is a fourth, and it is the one that needs no lawyer: **reversion.** The land was always ours; it is coming back. Where the others convert the status of the land, reversion converts the status of the *interval* — the three centuries of other people's occupation become a lapse rather than a right. Its precondition is narrow and namable: the conqueror must have a documentary or chronicle tradition supporting a prior claim, and the audience whose belief he needs must already honour that tradition. Where those hold, it is the cheapest settlement fiction in the repertoire, because it can be spoken rather than drafted.

Who could cross

The last question the settlement owes is who was inside it and who was out, and what marked the line — and here the case diverges from the colonial studies more sharply than anywhere else in this module.

The line was not drawn by descent. The *neftenya* settled in the south were drawn from Amhara, Oromo, Gurage and Tigrayan populations, and what united them was Orthodox Christianity, the Amharic language and service in the army, not a common ancestry. The greatest of the southern conquerors was Ras Gobana Dacche, an Oromo,

who conquered Oromo country for a Shewan king and became one of the most powerful men in the empire; the ethnic reading of this order either holds or breaks on Gobana, and it breaks. Kumsa Moroda of Leqa Naqamte crossed the line by submitting and being baptised, took the name Gabra Egziabher, was made *dejazmach*, and remained the ruler of his own country. Abba Jifar II of Jimma did not even have to convert: he kept Islam, kept his throne, kept his court, and fought for the empire.

So the marker of inside and outside was conquest status first — did you submit or resist — and confession and language second, and both were crossable. A southern notable who submitted, took baptism and learned Amharic could enter the order at a high level and pass his position to his son. That is an open boundary of a kind no colonial settlement in this collection possessed, because no metropole can dissolve a boundary that its own political community depends on, and this one had no metropole to protect.

And the other half of that sentence has to be said in the same breath, because the two together are the settlement's real shape. **The boundary was permeable at the top and sealed at the bottom.** A *balabbat* could cross; a *gabbar* could not. Not because of his blood — the empire was indifferent to his blood — but because what made him a *gabbar* was the absence of any claim to land, and his land had become somebody's gasha. Baptism did not restore it. Amharic did not restore it. A converted, Amharic-speaking *gabbar* was a *gabbar* who could be preached at in a language he understood. The ladder was genuinely open and it started above his head.

The drift

One further thing, brief here because it belongs to the later modules but decisive for them.

Maderia was, in principle, land in lieu of salary — a grant for the duration of service, revocable, reverting to the state. Within a generation it was not. The obligations of the *gabbar* households outlasted the man they were assigned to and attached to his heirs; the holdings passed to sons; and across the first decades of the twentieth century, in the south and not in the north, the measured gashas hardened into private property that could be sold and mortgaged. Bahru Zewde makes the point that the vocabulary itself migrated to follow the reality: in the south *rist*, which in its northern origin meant a usufructuary claim held through kinship, came to mean absolute private property, and *gabbar*, which had meant a man under obligation, lost its exploitative sense and came to mean simply a taxpayer.

That is the classic career of an office-grant, and this collection has watched it happen before: a revocable grant made to secure service becomes a heritable estate, then a

saleable one, and the state that made the grant discovers it has manufactured a landed class it can no longer unmake. It is why the arrangement made with a rope in the 1890s could only be undone in 1975 by a decree abolishing private ownership of rural land altogether, and why that decree, when it came, had to be total.

Reading the settlement against the framework

Four things, and the first is this study's principal contribution so far.

There is a fourth settlement fiction, and it is the one available to a conqueror with no auditor. The corpus has documented three — vacancy, recognition, divisibility — and every one of them is a *legal* fiction requiring a drafted instrument. That is not a fact about conquest. It is a fact about the corpus's sample, in which every documented case had a distant lawful public that had to be shown a statute. Ethiopia performs the identical conversion — relations between persons turned into countable, grantable things — with no statute whatever: a rope, a grading scale, a schedule of ranks, and a claim that the country was being recovered rather than taken. Call it **reversion**. Its precondition is a chronicle tradition supporting a prior title and an audience that already honours that tradition, and where both are present it is the cheapest fiction in the repertoire because it can be spoken instead of drafted. **The settlement's fiction is cut to whoever must be satisfied: a fiction addressed to a coordinating class at home can be spoken; a fiction addressed to a distant public that believes its government proceeds by law must be written, and it is the writing, not the taking, that the metropole compels.**

The consideration was armed service, which makes this the medieval form and installs the medieval defect in the founding clause. The single most diagnostic question about any co-optation is what the grantee owed in return. A grant purchasing armed service leaves a rival with a retinue; a grant purchasing political compliance leaves a dependant with a title, and the second is the modern colonial form and markedly the more stable. The *neftenya*'s land existed for one purpose: to keep a rifleman armed, mounted where possible, supplied at his own expense and available when summoned. His name means gun-carrier. Menelik's field army was the sum of his lords' and his settlers' contingents and had no other existence. This is Marc Bloch's tenurial bargain, arrived at independently on a different continent thirteen centuries later, with the identical clause and therefore the identical liability: the king's army is the army that can remove the king. This study should therefore date the first serious revolt of the armed grantees and track the fault to the end, and the expectation set here is that when the order finally breaks it will break from that side.

The unit of account was the household, and the absence of a disguise is itself the finding. Where the conquests with metropoles granted land and then manufactured labour indirectly — a tax in a currency the household did not hold, so that the compulsion sat in the arithmetic rather than in the statute book — this settlement assigned cultivating families directly and by number, from a *ras*'s thousand down to a common soldier's ten. Nothing was concealed because there was nobody from whom to conceal it. This is the sharpest confirmation the study has yet produced of its organising question: the elaborate indirection of the colonial extraction was never a technique for getting labour, since labour can be got much more simply by ordering it. **It was a technique for getting labour while remaining legible as lawful to people three thousand miles away.**

The boundary was permeable at the top and sealed at the bottom, which is a configuration the colonial cases in this collection do not contain, and it follows directly from the absence of a home franchise to protect. A conquered notable could submit, take baptism and Amharic, and enter the order at its highest levels, passing his position to his sons — Gobana, Kumsa Moroda, and Abba Jifar, who did not even convert. A conquered cultivator could not enter it at all, because the qualification for entry had become a claim to land and his had been measured away. That combination — an open elite and a closed base — should be held now and tested hard when this study comes to what the order taught its subjects, because it predicts something specific: that formation here will be imposed rather than withheld, and that imposing it will still not open the bottom of the ladder.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. The claim that no settlement statute exists is a negative and rests on this study's failure to find one; if an Ethiopian land ordinance of the 1890s exists, this module's central contribution requires revision, and the possibility is recorded here rather than buried. The *gabbar* obligation figures — two to three days a week, a third to a half of the harvest, and the higher figures cited in some literature — come from scholarship built substantially on oral testimony collected in the twentieth century about the early twentieth century, and they describe a system that varied enormously by district, by decade and by the character of the individual *neftenya*; they are ranges and not rates. The allocation schedules in land and in households come from Markakis and from the Oromo-studies literature and do not agree in detail. The Sululta case of land sold back to its cultivators is a single district thesis. The text of Menelik's letter to Amir Abdullahi has not been verified. And the reader should note that the great majority of the detailed reconstruction of this system was done by scholars — McClellan on Gedeo and Sidama, Guluma Gemeda and others on the Gibe — working from informants two and three generations after the fact, in a

period when the system's memory was politically charged, and that no *qalad* register from the 1890s has been consulted here.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module, and that absence is itself part of the finding: the instruments this module went looking for do not appear to exist, and what survives instead is administrative practice reconstructed by historians from registers, estate records and testimony. Menelik's reported letter to Amir Abdullahi of Harar — that Harar had been an Ethiopian province for four hundred years, that the administration must be restored and the annual land tax paid as in former times, and that peaceful submission would earn the terms granted to Abba Jifar of Jimma — is given as reported in the secondary literature and is not quoted, because no text has been verified.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Allan Hoben on the northern *rist* and *gult* rights whose absence in the south defines the case; Donald Crummey on land documents; Charles McClellan on the *neftenya-gabbar* system, on Gedeo and Sidama, and on settlers declining measured land in the hope of receiving households instead; John Markakis for the schedule of land grants by rank; Michael Stahl for the harvest share; Bahru Zewde for the classification of the conquered territories, for the drift of *maderia* into private property, and for the migration of the words *rist* and *gabbar*; Guluma Gemeda and the Jimma and Addis Ababa university theses cited in the recent literature for the Limmu and Sululta material; Herbert Lewis on Jimma's retained autonomy. Karl Polanyi's account of the fictitious commodity is used as a description of the operation and not as an authority on Ethiopia. The comparative instruments referred to — the Kenyan Crown Lands Ordinances, the Algerian *sénatus-consulte* of 1863 and *loi Warnier* of 1873, and the Uganda Agreement of 1900 — are reported from the other studies in this collection, where they are quoted from their texts.

Figures. A gasha is conventionally given as about forty hectares and was in practice a variable quantity depending on the grade of land measured. The *sisso* proportion is given as one-third to the *balabbat* and two-thirds to the state and its grantees, with some districts reported at nearer three-quarters taken; the variation appears to track the degree of resistance and no comprehensive schedule has been consulted. All allocation figures are given as ranges and attributed above.

MODULE 3

An Island of Christians in a Sea of Pagans

The robe: what the order said about itself, in whose currency, and to which of the several audiences that could have been addressed — and which one was not addressed at all.

Two robes, and a third that was never cut

An order's account of itself is not decoration and it is not propaganda in the loose sense. It is a working component, and the test of whether it is working is whether people obey without being made to. Yohannes IV stated the operating principle himself in 1872 when he told the British Foreign Secretary that without a particular manuscript his own people would not obey his orders — a sentence that costs an emperor a great deal of dignity to write and which he wrote anyway, because he needed the book back.

The framework's rule about such accounts is that they are cut to a currency the audience already honours. Nobody manufactures a legitimacy from nothing; the conqueror finds out what his audience already treats as authoritative and demonstrates that he has it. Which means the first question about any robe is not what it claims but whom it is addressed to — and the second, which is usually more revealing, is who is *not* addressed.

Menelik's order produced two robes. One was Solomonic, Orthodox, dynastic and in Ge'ez and Amharic, and it was addressed to the Ethiopian nobility, the church and the Christian highland peasantry — the men whose obedience the order actually ran on. The other was written in Amharic and translated into French and Italian, and it was addressed to five European governments; it spoke of ancient sovereignty, Christian civilisation and a coastline lost to Islam. Both were elaborate, expensive and carefully maintained.

Neither was addressed to the Arsi, the Kaffa, the Wolayta, the Sidama, the Gedeo or the Somali.

The robe for the men who had to obey

Begin with a fact about Menelik's position that is usually passed over and explains almost everything he did with the domestic robe: **his own Solomonic claim was the weakest of the three imperial claimants of his century, and he knew it.**

Tewodros had no dynastic claim at all and made one by force. Yohannes IV had Tigray, and Tigray had Aksum — the coronation city, the ruined stelae, the cathedral of Maryam Tsion where the Ark is said to rest, and the whole physical apparatus of the Solomonic legend on the ground under his feet. Menelik had Shewa. His ancestors had ruled Menz since the seventeenth century and their connection to the Solomonic line, traced through a claimed descent from the sixteenth-century emperor Lebna Dengel, was exactly that: a claim, made by a provincial house that had risen during the Era of the Princes, and one that a Tigrayan could dispute and did.

So Menelik bought what he did not inherit, and he bought it in four distinct transactions.

He took the name. Baptised Sahle Maryam, he ruled and was crowned as Menelik — the second of that name, the successor of the son of Solomon and the queen of the south who had brought the Ark to Ethiopia. Whether the name was given in infancy by his grandfather Sahle Selassie or assumed at his accession the sources do not agree, and this study will not pretend to settle it; either way the effect is the same, and it is the most economical legitimating act available to a man in his position. His horse-name, by which soldiers knew him, was Abba Dagnew.

He married the north. In 1883 he married Taytu Betul, born in Semien around 1851, of the Gondarine and Yejju houses — which is to say of exactly the northern aristocracy whose support had gone to Tewodros and Yohannes and whose lands and networks lay in the provinces where a Shewan was a stranger. She brought farmland, pasture, kin and a commercial network, and she brought standing in the country Menelik was not from. When they were crowned she became the first *Itege* to be crowned by the emperor in a church rather than in the palace, on the day after his own coronation, which is a small ceremonial upgrade and not an accidental one.

He was crowned with the full formula. On 3 November 1889, at the church of Mary on Mount Entoto above the new capital, eight months after Yohannes died at Metemma, Menelik took the style that the Solomonic dynasty had used and that his successor would put on every seal and court document in the empire: Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. The Italian painter Pio Joris recorded the ceremony. The formula is worth pausing on, because every element of it is a borrowing and none of them is Ethiopian in origin. The lion of the tribe of Judah is from Genesis and Revelation. Election by God is the common property of European monarchy. King of Kings is Persian by way of the Bible. What the formula asserts is not local authority but membership of a very old and very prestigious international category, and that is what it was for.

And he built churches, and he gave them land. The Entoto Maryam church, built in 1877, was where he was crowned. The great churches of the new capital followed. In the conquered south, as the earlier module recorded, church land — *samon* — was carved out of the measured gashas from the first surveys, and Ras Gobana is reported to have ordered two gashas from every district administrator's holding to go to priests, deacons and *debtera*. The clergy were not commentators on this settlement. They were beneficiaries of it, endowed out of it, and their endorsement was purchased with the same land the soldiers received.

Behind all of it stood the *abun*, the Egyptian Copt appointed from Alexandria who alone could ordain, and whose presence was the guarantee that the sacraments in Menelik's churches were valid. Menelik had four bishops obtained from Alexandria in 1881, an unusual number, and one of them, Abuna Matewos, became the principal ecclesiastical figure of the reign. An emperor who claimed descent from Solomon still had to send abroad and pay for the man who made his priests priests.

Read all five acts together and the pattern is unmistakable, and it is a general proposition rather than a fact about Menelik. **The apex with the weakest hereditary claim invests most heavily in the robe.** Yohannes did not need to take a legendary name; he had Aksum. Menelik needed the name, the marriage, the formula, the churches and the bishops, and he acquired all five within a few years of taking the throne. Investment in legitimation is inversely proportional to the security of the claim, which is why the most elaborate coronations in history have generally been staged by usurpers and cadet branches, and why a secure dynasty can afford to be casual about ceremony in a way a new one never can.

What the robe did not attempt

Now the negative, which is the more important half of this module.

The Solomonic robe was not preached to the conquered south. There was no missionary campaign in the southern provinces on anything like the scale that the Christian claim would have justified, no systematic effort to make Kaffa or Arsi or Wolayta into believing subjects of the Lion of Judah, and no attempt to teach the conquered why the arrangement they were living under was right. Churches were built in the garrison towns, and they were built for the garrisons. Priests received land, and they received it as grantees of the settlement rather than as apostles to the settled.

What Menelik did instead was tolerate. He is credited in the standard accounts with departing from the crusading practice of his predecessors — Yohannes IV had pressed forced conversion on Muslim Wollo with real severity — and with permitting Muslims and adherents of traditional religion to practise. Abba Jifar II of Jimma kept his throne,

his court and his Islam, and Jimma remained a centre of Islamic learning under Ethiopian suzerainty for half a century. Muslim merchants moved and traded. Conversion existed as a route upward for notables who wanted one: Kumsa Moroda of Leqa Naqamte took baptism as Gabra Egziabher and was made *dejazmach*. But it was a door for individuals, not a programme for populations.

That tolerance is real and should be credited to him. It should also be read structurally, and the structural reading is not flattering. **Tolerance is very much cheaper than conversion.** Conversion is the most expensive thing a state can attempt: it requires clergy in numbers, a language the hearers speak, schools, generations, and the endless patience of people who must be persuaded rather than compelled. A conqueror undertakes it when he needs the conquered to believe — because he intends to govern them thinly, or to recruit from them, or to rely on their loyalty against someone else. A conqueror who has a decisive weapons monopoly, a garrison in every district, and a settlement that pays for itself out of the cultivators' labour does not need the conquered to believe anything. He needs them to plough. And the cheapest possible policy toward a population whose belief you do not require is to leave it alone.

So the same emperor who spent very heavily on legitimacy in two directions spent almost nothing on it in the third, and the third was the direction where the largest number of people lived. This study registers that here and refuses to close it, because it is the hinge of the whole enterprise. The corpus's colonial pattern says formation is withheld from the conquered majority because forming them would mean admitting them, and admitting them would threaten a franchise at home. Menelik had no franchise at home to threaten. If formation was nevertheless withheld, then the metropole was never the cause of it — and the cause was simply that the belief was not needed. That is a different and more uncomfortable proposition and it is not yet proved. Menelik did issue an education proclamation in 1906 and did open a school in 1908, and the churches in the south did in time make converts. Whether that adds up to formation withheld or formation imposed is the question the next module has to answer, and this study is at a genuine fork.

The robe for the men who could partition him

The second robe was cut for Europe, and the striking thing about it is how early it starts.

In 1882 Menelik was still *negus* of Shewa, a vassal, and had just beaten another vassal at Embabo in a private war between two of Yohannes's subordinates. Bahru Zewde's observation on what he did next is worth having exactly, because it is this study's whole question stated by an Ethiopian historian without any framework at all: Menelik

announced his Embabo victory to the outside powers, which Bahru reads as a demonstration of his awareness of the external implications of his internal expansion. An internal battle between two provincial kings was reported to European chanceries by the winner.

Five years later, before the Harar campaign, Menelik set out to King Umberto I of Italy — and, as Bahru puts it, through him to a European audience — the historical and economic justifications of the campaign he was about to conduct. **The conquest was narrated to Europe in advance.** That is not the behaviour of a man who thinks the world is not watching. It is the behaviour of a man who has understood that in 1887 a piece of African territory belongs to whoever the other powers agree it belongs to, and that the agreement is manufactured by paper.

The mature statement came in April 1891. Menelik, now emperor for two years, issued a circular to the rulers of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia defining what he held to be the legitimate boundaries of Ethiopia. He was doing what the European powers had been doing to each other since Berlin: staking a claim in writing, to the other claimants, before going to take it. The passage that everyone quotes runs, in the English rendering that circulates most widely:

> *I have no intention at all of being an indifferent spectator, if the distant Powers hold onto the idea of dividing up Africa. For the past fourteen centuries Ethiopia has been an island of Christians in a sea of Pagans. Since the All-Powerful has protected Ethiopia up until now, I am hopeful that He will keep and enlarge it also in the future, and I do not think for a moment that He will divide Ethiopia among the distant Powers. In the past, the boundary of Ethiopia was the sea. Without our use of force and without the aid of the Christians, our boundary on the sea fell into the hands of the Muslims. Today we do not pretend to be able to recover our seacoast by force; but we hope that the Christian Powers, advised by our Savior, Jesus Christ, will restore our seacoast boundary to us, or give us at least a few ports along the coast.*

A caution before anything is built on that. The letter was written in Amharic; the versions in circulation are English translations of translations, they differ in wording between reproductions — "indifferent spectator" in some, "indifferent looker-on" in others — and this study has not consulted an Amharic original or the Rubenson edition of the correspondence. The wording is therefore given as the standard English rendering rather than as the emperor's words, and the argument below rests on the substance rather than the phrasing.

The substance is extraordinary, and it repays reading twice.

Every term in it is European. Not Ethiopian — European. "An island of Christians in a sea of Pagans" is the vocabulary of the mission societies and the geographical congresses, the exact idiom in which Leopold justified the Congo Free State and Lugard justified the Niger. "The Christian Powers, advised by our Saviour" addresses the recipients as co-religionists with a shared duty. The claim that the sea-frontier fell to the Muslims converts a territorial demand into a grievance about the wrong sort of people holding Christian ground. And the fourteen centuries do the work that in a European chancery only antiquity could do: they establish that Ethiopia is not a chieftaincy to be pacified but a sovereignty older than most of the states receiving the letter.

And then, in the same document, the boundaries. Menelik's statement of what he intended to recover is reported as an endeavour, if God gave him life and strength, to re-establish the ancient frontiers of Ethiopia up to Khartoum and as far as Lake Nyanza — Lake Victoria. That claim is enormous, and whether Ethiopian authority had ever reached anywhere near either place is precisely what a body of scholarship disputes; the objection that no evidence exists of Ethiopian power ever being felt as far west as Khartoum or as far south as Lake Victoria is made in the literature and should be recorded here. What matters for this module is not whether the claim was good but what kind of claim it was, and it was the reversion claim of the previous module — the land was always ours — scaled to continental size and addressed to the only audience that could grant it.

Set the two halves of the letter beside each other and the operation is complete. **A man conducting a conquest of pagan and Muslim Africa wrote to the European powers to say that he could not stand by while Africa was divided, because he was a Christian sovereign of fourteen centuries' standing surrounded by a sea of pagans — and asked them, as fellow Christians, to help him get to Khartoum and Lake Victoria.** He was not arguing against the partition of Africa. He was arguing for a seat at it, in the language of the men holding the knives, and on the same grounds they were using.

It worked. Not immediately and not because of the letter, but the letter established the register, and after Adwa the register was accepted. Ethiopia was recognised as a sovereign state, exchanged legations, signed boundary treaties with Britain in 1897 and 1902, with France, and with Italy in 1900 and 1908, and had its conquests — including the ones made after 1896 in Kaffa, Beni Shangul, the Ogaden and the far south — written into the map of Africa as the territory of a recognised power rather than as anyone's colony. The lake that Ras Wolde Giyorgis reached in March 1898 was on the

far side of a line that European foreign ministries had agreed to draw where Menelik said it should go.

The word that was not the same in both texts

The seam between the two robes is visible in exactly one document, and it is the document this whole case study was chosen for.

Article XVII of the Treaty of Wuchale, in the Italian text ratified at Monza on 29 September 1889 and published in the Italian official collection, reads:

> *Sua Maestà il Re dei Re d'Etiopia consente di servirsi del Governo di Sua Maestà il Re d'Italia per tutte le trattazioni di affari che avesse con altre potenze o governi.*

His Majesty the King of Kings of Ethiopia consents to avail himself of the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy for all dealings of business which he may have with other powers or governments.

The Amharic text of the same article used a permissive construction — the verb reported in the literature as *yichalachewal*, he is able to, he may — so that the emperor might, if he wished, make use of Italian good offices. This study has not consulted the Amharic original and reports the verb as it is given in the secondary literature, which is a real limitation on a point this heavy.

And Article XIX, in both texts, declares that the treaty being drafted in Italian and Amharic and the two versions agreeing perfectly with one another, both texts are to be held official and of equal faith in every respect.

That is the object. Two texts, one permitting and one obliging, with a clause between them certifying that they agree.

The consequences ran fast. In October 1889 Italy notified the other European powers that Ethiopia was an Italian protectorate under the treaty, and the powers, with the exception of the Ottomans and of Russia, accepted the notification. Menelik, writing to European sovereigns in early 1890 to announce his accession, was informed that his correspondence should be conducted through Rome. He had not agreed to any such thing, and said so, and the dispute was not resolved by diplomacy, and in the end it was resolved at Adwa.

Sven Rubenson's study of the article, published in Addis Ababa in 1964 and built on the original Italian and Amharic texts and drafts, concluded that the responsibility for the divergence lay with Antonelli rather than with Menelik or with his interpreter Yosef — Antonelli having negotiated in Amharic, which he knew well, and being

therefore unlikely to have missed what the two texts did and did not say. Others have argued for error or for mutual convenience. The matter is not closed, and this study does not close it.

What the framework can say without adjudicating is more useful than an adjudication would be.

Italy in 1889 did not want Ethiopian land. It wanted Ethiopian standing. The whole value of Article XVII lay in what could be done with it in third capitals: notify Berlin, Paris and London that Ethiopia's external relations run through Rome, and Ethiopia ceases, in the only forum that mattered, to be a state. No troops were required for that and none were sent. A protectorate declared and accepted by the other powers was worth more, in the system of 1889, than a province held by an army — and it cost the price of a verb.

And Menelik, correspondingly, went to war over the verb. Not over Bogos, Hamasien, Akkele Guzay and Serae, which Article III of the same treaty had ceded and which he did not get back at Adwa or afterwards; Italy kept Eritrea. He fought, and won, and then signed a treaty on 23 October 1896 whose central content was the abrogation of Article XVII and the unqualified recognition of his independence. He traded territory for status, deliberately, twice — in 1889 and again in 1896.

That is the price of the outward robe, stated in the only currency that cannot be argued with: an emperor gave up a province to keep a description of himself, and then fought a war and gave up the province again to get the description in writing.

Reading the robe against the framework

Four things, and two of them modify the collection's existing account.

The robe is cut for whoever holds the veto, and the veto is not always fiscal. The corpus's colonial pattern predicted a reversed robe — the legitimating story cut not for the conquered, whose belief the floor does not require, but for the metropole, whose belief funds and mans the conquest. Ethiopia produces the reversal without the metropole. Menelik's outward robe was addressed to five governments that funded nothing, manned nothing, and had no claim on him whatever. What they controlled was one thing only: whether he counted as a sovereign in the system that was at that moment dividing the continent. So the audience for a robe is not defined by who pays. **It is defined by who can withdraw the thing the order cannot obtain any other way.** For a colonial governor that is money and men, and the robe accordingly goes home to the taxpayer. For Menelik it was recognition, and the robe accordingly went to the chanceries. The generalisation the corpus should carry forward is that an apex will

dress for whoever holds a veto over something it cannot replace — and that identifying the veto-holder, rather than assuming it is the paymaster, is the first step in reading any robe.

A robe can be borrowed sideways — from a rival's justificatory vocabulary — to claim parity rather than to petition. This collection has repeatedly seen subject peoples take up the conqueror's own vocabulary in order to petition him, quoting his statutes and his scriptures back at him because it is the only register he is obliged to hear. Menelik did something structurally different and, as far as this study's cases go, new. He took up the vocabulary of a rival conqueror — Christian civilisation, the pagan sea, ancient sovereignty, the Muslim usurpation — and used it not to ask for mercy but to assert that he was one of them and entitled to a share. He was not appealing against the partition of Africa; he was applying to join it, on grounds the applicants could not reject without abandoning their own justification. The condition that makes this available is narrow: the borrower must actually possess the qualifying attribute, and Menelik did — the Christianity was fourteen centuries old and was not manufactured for the occasion. Where that condition holds, the borrowed robe is nearly unanswerable, because rejecting it means admitting that the vocabulary was always a pretext.

Two robes were cut and neither was for the conquered, and this study must not attribute that to the metropole it does not have. The domestic robe went to the nobility, the church and the Christian peasantry; the outward robe went to Europe; nothing at all went to Arsi, Kaffa, Wolayta or the Ogaden. If the corpus's explanation for withheld formation is franchise anxiety at home, that explanation is unavailable here, because there was no franchise. The alternative explanation — that a conqueror does not buy a belief he does not need, and that a weapons monopoly plus a self-financing settlement means he does not need it — survives, and it is both simpler and worse. But the case is not yet made: Menelik tolerated rather than converted, which is not the same as suppressing, and he did later legislate for schools. **This module records the fork rather than resolving it, and states plainly that the next module decides whether the study's organising hypothesis holds or takes its first serious damage.**

Investment in the robe is inversely proportional to the security of the claim. Menelik, whose Solomonic descent ran through a seventeenth-century Menz cadet house and was contestable, took the legendary name, married the Gondarine north, staged the fullest available coronation with the whole biblical formula, crowned his empress in church rather than palace, endowed the clergy out of the conquest, and obtained bishops from Alexandria. Yohannes, who held Aksum, did none of these things with anything like the same energy, because he did not have to. This is offered as

a proposition testable across the whole collection: where a case shows unusually heavy expenditure on ceremony, genealogy or ecclesiastical endowment, look for a defect in the title, and the expenditure will locate it.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. The 1891 circular is quoted from the English rendering in general circulation; the Amharic original has not been consulted, the published English versions differ in wording, and the provenance of the schoolbook reproductions from which the passage most often reaches readers is not traceable here. The Khartoum and Lake Nyanza claim is likewise reported at second hand. The Amharic wording of Wuchale Article XVII is given as the literature reports it and has not been checked against the text, which matters because the entire dispute turns on one verb. Menelik's letter to Umberto I justifying the Harar campaign is known here only through Bahru Zewde's characterisation of it. And the account of Menelik's religious tolerance rests on the standard biographical literature and has not been tested against district-level evidence from the conquered provinces, where the practice may well have differed from the policy — a gap the next modules should close.

A note on sources. One passage is quoted verbatim from a verified text: Article XVII of the Treaty of Wuchale in the Italian, from the treaty as published in the Italian official collection of laws and decrees following ratification on 29 September 1889, with a translation made here. The Amharic counterpart is described, not quoted. The passage from Menelik's circular of April 1891 is given in the standard English rendering, flagged above as a translation of uncertain provenance, and is the only extended quotation in this module not taken from a verified original.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Bahru Zewde for Menelik's announcement of Embabo to the powers, for his advance justification of the Harar campaign to Umberto I, and for the characterisation of the 1891 circular as a well-publicised definition of claimed boundaries; Sven Rubenson for the conclusion on responsibility for the Article XVII divergence, from his 1964 study of the article and his later work on the survival of Ethiopian independence; Harold Marcus on Menelik's career; Herbert Lewis on Jimma's retained Islam and autonomy. The characterisation of Menelik's religious policy as a departure from his predecessors' is drawn from the standard reference literature.

Dates and details. Menelik was crowned on 3 November 1889 at the church of Mary on Mount Entoto, having been proclaimed emperor in March following Yohannes IV's death at Metemma on 9 March; Taytu was crowned the following day. Her birth is given as about 1851 in Semien and the marriage as 1883, with some accounts giving 1882. Italy notified the powers of a protectorate in October 1889 and Menelik repudiated the Italian reading in 1890–91, formally denouncing the treaty in

1893; the dates given in the literature for the successive stages of the repudiation vary by a year in places and are given here as the sequence rather than as a chronology.

MODULE 4

Who Named the Child

Formation: which institution owned the child's frame in each of the orders on this ground, what the conquest did to that ownership, and what was left running afterwards.

The wrong place to look

The temptation in this module is to count schools. Menelik issued an education proclamation in 1906 and opened a school in 1908, and by his death in 1913 there were four of them in an empire of many millions, and it would be easy to write that down as the answer and move on.

It is not the answer, because schooling is a late and minor instrument of the thing this module is actually about. Formation, in the sense this collection uses, is the installation in a child — before the vigilance that would screen it has matured — of the entire frame through which he will afterwards judge everything: who his people are, who his natural leaders are, which sources are to be trusted and which discounted, what is negotiable and what is beyond argument, what the year looks like, what a man owes, and what things are simply the way the world is rather than one arrangement among possible others. It is installed by naming, by the calendar, by the ritual year, by the first texts a child is made to say aloud, by the transition rites at which the community rather than the family confers his status, and by the thousand ordinary acts of a household that has itself been formed. It is not propaganda and it is not a priestly trick, and treating it as either misses what it does. Propaganda argues with a formed adult and usually loses. Formation supplies the adult with the standards by which he will later judge all arguments, including arguments about propaganda.

The governing fact, and the one that makes this module's finding possible, is that **there is no unformed person.** To be unformed is to be feral. Every child in every district on this plateau was being formed continuously, by somebody, in the 1880s and the 1890s and the 1910s. A conqueror who declines to form the conquered has not left them blank and available. He has conceded the ground to whoever else is doing the work — and somebody always is.

So the question this module has to answer is not how many schools Menelik built. It is: in each of the populations his empire contained, who owned the child at four and at eight and at sixteen; what the conquest did to that ownership; and what was still running when it had finished.

The northern machine

The Christian highland order possessed one of the most complete formation systems anywhere in the pre-industrial world, and it had been running for something over a millennium.

A child entered it before he could speak. Baptism came at forty days for a boy and eighty for a girl, and the name came with it — from the church, out of the calendar of saints, conferred by a priest, not chosen by a household. The godparent relation established a second set of obligations across families. From that moment the child's year was the church's year: something in the region of a hundred and eighty fasting days annually for an observant adult, the weekly and monthly feasts of Mary and Michael and George, the great fixed points of Meskel in September and Timkat in January when the *tabot* — the consecrated tablet that is the actual holy thing in an Ethiopian church, the sanctuary's reason for existing — was carried out of the sanctuary in procession under a canopy while the whole district followed it. A child raised in that year did not have to be told that the tablet mattered. He watched everyone he had ever trusted walk behind it in the rain.

Then the school. The *nibab bet*, the reading house, was a teacher under a tree or in a hut beside a church, and the sequence of instruction was fixed by tradition and identical across the country. The child learned the Ge'ez syllabary. Then he read, and then memorised, the first chapter of the First Epistle of John. Then the Gospel of John. Then the Psalter, entire. The emphasis was on repetition and recitation, and the consequence was that even children who never became literate absorbed the scriptures wholesale by chanting them — the text went in whether or not the reading did.

Above that, for the minority who continued, lay a structure of considerable sophistication: the *qidase bet* for the liturgy; the *zema bet* for the chant of Saint Yared with its notation and its four divisions; the *aquaquam bet* for the sacred dance; the *qene bet* for poetry; the *meshaf bet* for the books, the Old and New Testaments with the commentaries of the Fathers. Students left home for years and wandered from parish to monastery, living on charity, to follow particular teachers.

The *qene* school deserves a moment because of what it teaches beyond itself. Ethiopian *qene* is composed in a system called *samenna worq* — wax and gold — in which a verse carries a surface meaning and a second, concealed meaning underneath it, and the whole art lies in constructing lines that read innocently and mean something else. Students learn perhaps nine standard forms, from a two-line epigram upward, and compose to order on the saint whose feast falls the next day. A boy trained in this does not merely learn poetry. He learns, as the ordinary furniture of educated speech, that statements have surfaces and interiors, that the powerful are addressed in one register

and understood in another, and that meaning is a thing one is trained to see beneath. That is a formation in how to read the world, installed as a literary exercise.

And the *bahre hasab*, the computus, was taught alongside: the calculation of the movable feasts, the reckoning of the year. The institution that owned the child's education also owned time.

What all of this installed can be stated exactly, because it is what the graduates of it plainly believed. That the God of Israel had transferred his covenant to Ethiopia. That the emperor descended from Solomon by Makeda and the descent was the ground of his right. That a priest was a priest because a bishop from Alexandria had laid hands on him. That Ge'ez was the language of God and Amharic the language of the king. That Christians were one people and Muslims and *arämäne* — pagans — were outside it. It also installed a contemptuous category for the largest population on the plateau: the term *Galla*, used by the Christian kingdom and by every European who copied it, and the body of derisive sayings that Oromo scholars have collected and published as evidence of what northern children were taught to think. Those sayings are not reproduced here; that they are attested at all is the point, and the point is that the northern formation did not merely omit the Oromo. It supplied a place for them.

Two structural features of this machine matter more than its content. The first is that it was **self-funding and self-reproducing**: it ran on *samon* land granted to churches and on the labour of the peasants attached to that land, not on a state budget, which meant it neither required nor answered to the throne. The second follows from the first: **the emperor did not own it.** He endowed it, he was crowned by it, and he could not direct it — a fact that will do a great deal of work at the end of this module.

How the soldier was made

The empire's fighting men were formed by the same machine with a second stage bolted on, and it is worth setting out because a conquest is only as durable as the formation of the men conducting it.

A boy of promise was given into the household of a great man — a *ras*, a *dejazmach*, a governor — and raised there as a retainer, fed at his table, and attached to him personally rather than to an office or a state. He acquired a horse-name, the name by which soldiers addressed a man in the field: Menelik's own was Abba Dagnew. He learned the *fukkera* and the *shilela*, the boasting-chant in which a warrior declaims before battle and after it what he has done and whose man he is, delivered in front of the assembled unit, which is a formation instrument of the first order because it makes reputation public, competitive and immediate. He was blessed before campaigns by

priests who carried a *tabot* with the army, so that the march itself was a religious procession. He was formed to believe that Saint George rode with him.

The result is a soldier whose loyalty runs to a named man and whose war is sanctified — a combination that produces a superb field army and a chronically unstable state, since each contingent's obedience is personal and the church's blessing is available to whoever holds the church's favour. But the immediate point is narrower and it is the pivot of this module. **This machine worked on anyone.** A boy taken into a Shewan lord's household emerged formed regardless of what his grandfather had been, and a great many of the men who conquered the south were themselves of Oromo descent — Ras Gobana Dacche above all, and Fitawrari Habte Giyorgis, Menelik's war minister, who came from the conquered peoples and rose to the top of the order. The empire's formation apparatus was not ethnically restricted and there was nothing in it that prevented it being applied to any child on the plateau.

Hold that, because it means the withholding that follows was not for want of a machine or for want of a doctrine that the machine could only work on some children. It could work on any of them. It was simply not pointed at most of them.

The other machine

Across the escarpment, and in most of the territory Menelik took, a different apparatus was running and it was every bit as complete.

The Oromo *gadaa* order formed a child from birth by placing him, before he could have any say in it, into a generation-class whose position was fixed by his father's. The first grade — *dabballe* in most reconstructions — ran from birth to about eight, and it was a liminal condition: the boys were the sons of the ruling *luba*, they were addressed in the feminine, and they were outside the ordinary status of males. Then came the transition, and the transition is the thing to look at. At about eight the boy's head was shaved, in some accounts by his father at a named shrine, the ritual hairstyle of the next grade was cut, and **he was given his name.** Not by his household — by the passage. From that moment he was in *gamme*, permitted to herd and to go further from the village, and he moved through the grades at eight-year intervals for the rest of his life, each with its duties, each entered by a rite: hunting and heavy work, then the junior warrior grades under the *abba dula*, then the ruling *gadaa* grade in his forties, then the ranks of retirement and eventually the honoured liminal old age.

Above the grades sat the assembly. The *gumi* or *caffee* met at fixed places at fixed intervals, reviewed the laws, could examine the performance of the ruling council at the midpoint of its term, and could remove the *abba gadaa* if he had failed to uphold the constitution, the laws, the custom or the moral order. Any man might speak.

Alongside the political line ran the ritual one: the *qaalluu*, hereditary, the sanctioning authority, and the *abba muudaa*, the apolitical head of the assemblies of the *qaalluu*, to whom pilgrimage was made. The year had its great festival, *Irreecha*, the thanksgiving at the turn from the rains. And the whole thing was held in memory rather than writing — a man knew his generation, his set, his lineage, and could recite his descent.

The reconstructions differ and the differences should be stated. Asmarom Legesse's fieldwork was chiefly among the Borana; the grade names, the number of grades and their ages vary between the Borana, the Guji, the Tulama, the Macha and the Arsi, and the published lists in circulation do not agree — some give eleven grades, some fewer, and the age boundaries move by several years between accounts. What does not vary is the architecture: recruitment by generation rather than age, transition by public rite, a name conferred at the passage, an eight-year rhythm, an assembly with the power to remove, and a ritual authority standing apart from the political one.

Now put that architecture beside the northern one and notice what it makes impossible. A child formed in *gadaa* has installed in him, before he can weigh it, that authority is held for a term, that it rotates, that the assembly may remove the man who holds it, and that a person's standing comes from his generation and his conduct. A child formed in the northern machine has installed in him that authority descends from Solomon, that it is conferred by God through a bishop, and that it is not answerable to anybody on earth. These are not two flavours of the same thing. They are incompatible accounts of what a ruler is, and no empire could run the second over a population thoroughly formed in the first without doing something about it.

And there were others. Harar was a Muslim city of Arabic literacy with Qur'anic schools and a class of memorisers — Harari tradition holds that three hundred of them were killed when the city fell. Jimma under Abba Bo'ka had granted land to Muslim scholars and instructed its provincial officials to do the same, and was a centre of Islamic learning for a century. Bale had the shrine of Sheikh Hussein, one of the great pilgrimage sites of the Horn. Kaffa had the semi-divine *tato*, seen by almost no one, and its own ritual apparatus and its own hereditary councillors. Each was a complete formation machine with its own answer to who the natural leaders were.

What the conquest actually did to all of this

Three things, and it is important that they were only three.

First, it decapitated the assembly and left everything else running. The most consequential single act in this module is reported by the Ethiopian writer Atseme and quoted in the Oromo literature: that Menelik outlawed the major *caffee* assemblies in

the Oromo areas he conquered. The Dutch missionary-ethnographer Lambert Bartels, working among the Macha and writing in 1983, described the outcome in terms this study can use directly — that *gadaa* was gradually deprived by the northern administration of most of its political and judicial powers and reduced to a merely ritual institution. Both of those sources reach this study through advocacy-adjacent literature and neither has been checked against an archival original, and that is flagged here rather than buried, because a great deal rests on it. But the shape is consistent with everything else that is known: the empire installed *balabbats* who held their districts from the emperor, transferred judicial business to imperial courts and appointed *qoro*, and made the political functions of the assembly unavailable.

What it did not do is touch the rest. The naming rite went on. The age-grades went on. The *qaalluu* went on. *Irreecha* went on. The language in the household went on, and no serious attempt was made before the twentieth century to displace it — the systematic language prohibitions that appear in the literature belong to the reign of Haile Selassie, chiefly from the 1940s, and it is an error common in the polemical writing to read them back onto Menelik. What Menelik removed was the layer at which the formation became a government. He left the layer at which it became a person.

Second, it planted churches for the settlers and made baptism a door for notables. Churches went up in the *ketema*, the garrison towns, and priests received *samon* land out of the measured gashas from the first surveys. Those churches served the garrisons. Conversion existed as an individual route upward for men who wanted it — Kumsa Moroda of Leqa Naqamte took baptism, became Gabra Egziabher, and was made *dejazmach* — and it was a real door, genuinely open, and it admitted the men who walked through it. It was not a programme for populations. There was no vernacular catechism, no translation of the liturgy into Oromo or Kafficho or Wolaytta, no village school system, no attempt to put a *nibab bet* under a tree in every conquered district. The apparatus that had formed the north for a thousand years was not extended.

Third, it took children. The southern campaigns produced captives on a very large scale, and a proportion of those captives were children who entered northern and settler households, were baptised, were given Christian names, learned Amharic, and were raised inside the northern frame. This belongs in the extraction module for its economics and it belongs here for its mechanism, and the mechanism should be named without euphemism: **it was formation by abduction, and it worked, and it worked precisely because it took the child before the vigilance that would have screened it had matured.** A boy taken at six from Kaffa and raised in a Shewan household was not persuaded of anything. He was made into someone for whom the arrangement was

simply how the world is. This is the exploit in its most naked form in the whole collection, and the study will not soften it by filing it under labour.

The proclamation and the four schools

Against that background, set what the modern literature calls the beginning of education in Ethiopia.

In 1906 Menelik issued a proclamation. The rendering that circulates — and its translation provenance is not traceable here, so it is given as reported rather than as his words — states that in other countries young people not only learn but make new things, and that from that day all six-year-old boys and girls in Ethiopia should attend school; and it adds that the estate of a parent who did not send his children would, at that parent's death, pass to the government rather than to the children, and that the government would prepare the schools and provide the teachers.

That is a decree of universal compulsory schooling from age six, for both sexes, enforced by confiscation of the estate. It is as ambitious as anything any European state had legislated at that date.

Now the delivery. The school opened in October 1908 in Addis Ababa as the École Impériale, later the Menelik II School. Its first cohort was somewhere around a hundred to a hundred and fifty pupils, and they were, in the standard description, mostly the sons of nobles — except that they largely were not, because the nobility did not want their own children exposed to it and sent the children of their servants and retainers instead. It was staffed by Egyptian Copts under the educationalist Hanna Saleb, and the reason it was staffed by Egyptian Copts is the most revealing detail in the episode: the Ethiopian clergy opposed modern schooling as a threat to their authority and to Ge'ez literacy, and Menelik went to the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria — writing, according to the recent scholarship, five months after Adwa, on 3 July 1896 — to obtain teachers whose Orthodoxy would make the enterprise tolerable to his own church. By 1913 there were three further schools, at Harar, Dessie and Ankober.

Four schools. Perhaps a few hundred pupils in total. Staffed by foreigners. Sited in the capital, one conquered city that was a major garrison, and two northern towns. None in Arsi, none in Wolayta, none in Kaffa, none in Sidama, none in Gedeo, none in the Ogaden.

Read the emperor's position rather than his sincerity, because the two point in different directions and the position explains the outcome. There is no reason to doubt that Menelik meant the proclamation; it is of a piece with the telephone line, the railway, the hospital and the bank, and it cost him political capital with the church he depended on. But he had no apparatus. The only institution on the plateau that could

form children at scale was the church, the church was funded by its own land and not by his treasury, the church did not answer to him, and the church was against him — so much so that he had to import Egyptians to get four schools open. **A ruler who does not own the formation machine cannot direct it, and cannot build a second one out of nothing in a country with no printing, no teacher training, no vernacular orthographies and no revenue that reaches the centre in cash.**

So the empire's modern formation apparatus at the death of its founder consisted of four schools attended in part by the children of servants sent in place of their masters' sons. And in the same years, in every district of the conquered south, the machinery that had been forming those children before 1887 went on forming them.

Reading formation against the framework

Four things, and the first is this study's most important contribution so far.

Removing the institution while leaving the formation is the most dangerous of the available options, and it is the one an incapable conqueror will take. The corpus's colonial pattern is formation *withheld*: the conqueror declines to form, the prior formation holds the field, the population he refused to form is formed anyway, and in time it becomes the problem. Ethiopia produces a sharper and more specific variant. Menelik did not merely decline to form the south. He **outlawed the assembly and left the naming rite**. He removed the layer at which *gadaa* was a government and left untouched the layer at which it was a person — the generation-classes, the transition rites, the conferred name, the *qaalluu*, the ritual year, the cosmology, the memorised descent, the language of the household. What that produces is not a defused formation. It is a **loaded** one: a complete frame — a cosmology, a genealogy, a calendar, a moral order, a full account of who one's people are and what legitimate authority looks like — installed in every child of every generation, and detached from any institution through which it could act.

A frame in that condition does not decay. It waits, and it attaches to the first political vehicle that presents itself. When vehicles began to appear in the twentieth century, they did not have to build a people; the people had been formed continuously for eighty years by machinery the empire had left running, and the frame they had been given contained, as one of its founding contents, an account of authority as removable by an assembly — which is a formidable thing to have installed in a population governed by a hereditary emperor.

State the law generally, because it should be tested against every case in the collection. A conqueror facing an intact rival formation has four options and only four. He can destroy both the formation and its institution, which is genocidal and beyond

the means of nearly everyone who has tried it. He can replace both, which is enormously expensive and — since a fully formed subject is by that fact a claimant — obliges him to admit the formed. He can leave both intact, which leaves a rival power standing but also leaves a counterparty with an address, an assembly, and men who can negotiate and be held to a bargain. Or he can remove the institution and leave the formation, which is the cheapest thing to do and looks like success for about two generations. **The fourth option converts an organised rival into an unorganised and inextinguishable one. It replaces a body he could have bargained with by a frame he cannot reach.**

Withholding by incapacity is not withholding by policy, and this case isolates the second cause. In the colonial cases the mechanism was specific: the conqueror possessed a formation apparatus, could have extended it, and refused — because forming the conquered as Englishmen would have made them claimants on an English franchise, and the formation and the citizenship were the same substance. Menelik had no franchise to protect, and the proof is that a formed southerner *was* admitted: Gobana commanded armies, Habte Giyorgis became war minister, Kumsa Moroda kept his country and gained a title. Nothing structural stood between a formed southerner and the top of the order. Formation was withheld anyway, and the reasons were that the only machine belonged to an institution the emperor did not control and could not fund, that the institution actively opposed his attempts to build a second one, and that the settlement paid for itself without anyone in the south believing anything at all.

This partly rescues the study's organising hypothesis and partly damages it, and both halves should be entered in the ledger. The predicted mechanism — form them and you must admit them — is absent exactly as the hypothesis requires, and its absence is visible in the open door at the top. But the *outcome* is very nearly the colonial outcome regardless, which means the metropole was never the only road to it. **The refinement is this: the outward-facing half of the colonial bend is metropole-driven and vanishes when the metropole does; the inward-facing half has at least two independent causes — franchise anxiety and simple incapacity — and removing the metropole removes only one of them.** The hypothesis is not refuted. It is narrowed, and the narrowing is worth more than a clean confirmation would have been.

The empire was not incapable of forming. It formed exactly the people it needed. The *ketema* was a formation machine and it ran at full power: a settler's son, whatever his grandfather had been, came out Orthodox, Amharic-speaking, competent in the calendar, and certain that the emperor descended from Solomon — and so did a

captured child raised in a northern household, and so did an Oromo boy taken into a lord's retinue and given a horse-name. The machine worked on anybody. Its boundary was not blood and not doctrine. **The boundary of the formation apparatus was the wall of the garrison town, and it is precisely the boundary of the settlement.** Where the order needed belief, it paid for belief; where it needed only ploughing, it bought nothing. That is the whole of the pattern, and it required no theory of race to produce it.

Formation by abduction is a distinct mechanism and belongs in the framework under its own name. The one route by which the empire formed southerners in numbers was to take them as children and raise them inside its own households. It succeeded completely at the individual level, and it succeeded for the reason the framework predicts: it reached the child before the vigilance that would have screened it. It is the clearest instance in this collection of formation working as pure mechanism, stripped of persuasion, community and consent — and its efficacy is not an argument for anything. It is a measurement of how much of a person is installed rather than chosen, taken under conditions no one would have designed as an experiment and which nothing excuses.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. The claim that Menelik outlawed the *caffee* assemblies rests on Atseme as quoted in Oromo-movement literature and has not been traced to an original; Bartels's finding on the reduction of *gadaa* to a ritual institution is reported here at second hand from the same body of writing. Both are load-bearing for this module's central contribution and both need archival confirmation before the contribution is treated as settled. Much of the available material on language suppression, name-changing and the prohibition of ceremonies dates from the reign of Haile Selassie and is routinely read back onto Menelik in the polemical literature; this module has tried to keep the periods apart and may not have succeeded everywhere. The 1906 proclamation is quoted from a rendering of unknown provenance. The *gadaa* grade structures vary between peoples and between reconstructions and the account here is a composite. And the evidence on what actually happened to children in the conquered districts — as against what was decreed in Addis Ababa — is thin, late, and collected by interested parties on both sides.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. The 1906 education proclamation is given as reported in the secondary literature, with its translation provenance flagged; no Amharic original has been consulted.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Asmarom Legesse for the *gadaa* grade structure, chiefly from Borana fieldwork; Lambert Bartels for the reduction of *gadaa* to a ritual institution under imperial administration; Mohammed

Hassen and Abbas Haji Gnamo for the Oromo formation and for the collection of northern derisive sayings, which are not reproduced here; Herbert Lewis on Jimma's Islamic schools and endowments; Bahru Zewde on the conquest administration; the recent Ethiopian educational-history scholarship for the Menelik II School, its Egyptian Coptic staff under Hanna Saleb, the clergy's opposition, the reported letter of 3 July 1896 to the Coptic Patriarch, and the enrolment figures of around one hundred to one hundred and fifty; and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's own published accounts of the traditional school system for the sequence of instruction, the *qene* forms and the divisions of the higher schools. Atseme's statement on the outlawing of the assemblies reaches this study through the Oromo relief and studies literature and is flagged above.

Figures. Enrolment at the Menelik II School in its first years is given variously as around one hundred and around one hundred and fifty. The number of fasting days in the Ethiopian Orthodox year is given as approximately one hundred and eighty for a fully observant layman and is higher for clergy and monastics. The *gadaa* grade ages are given as ranges because the published reconstructions disagree.

MODULE 5

Where the Troops Dare Not Venture

The cost column: why the ordinary man complied — run separately for the six populations under this empire, because they were not one people and their ledgers did not total the same way.

The question, and why it has to be asked six times

This module is not about the hierarchy. It is about the man at the bottom of it — the ploughman, the tributary, the porter, the captive — and it asks one question about him: why did he comply?

The rule for answering is simple and its power is entirely in two corrections. A person acts on benefit against cost. But benefit is undefined until you know what that particular person values, so the answer is never simply material; and a cost is no cost unless the threat of it is credible, so what matters is not what the state could do but what everyone knows it will actually do. To those two, this case adds two more that the framework has always insisted on and that this ground tests unusually well: whether a man can leave, and what his own neighbours will do to him if he does not comply.

There is a reason the compliance can look like a mystery and the mystery usually dissolves. Where a man believes the arrangement is right — where his formation has installed the ruler as his natural ruler and the calendar as the shape of the year — the benefit column of compliance is loaded before any calculation begins, and the state needs to spend very little on force. Where there is no such belief and little material benefit, the state must supply the whole of the reason out of the cost column, and that is expensive, visible, and permanently precarious. The distance between those two conditions is most of what this collection measures.

And Ethiopia will not let the question be asked once. Under one emperor, in one decade, on one plateau, there were populations whose ledgers looked so different from each other that treating them as a single peasantry would produce nonsense. So it is asked six times.

The northern peasant

Begin with the man the empire came from, because he is the cheap pole and the comparison depends on him.

His benefit column had two heavy entries. The first was a property claim: *rist*, a share of ancestral land, claimable through either parent, in principle inalienable, which

the *gult*-holder over his district could tax but could not extinguish. He could go to court about it, and the courts were busy with exactly such disputes. He was not a tenant at will. The second entry was belief, and it was not thin belief. This was a man baptised at forty days and named by the church, whose year was the church's year with its hundred and eighty fasting days and its processions behind the *tabot*, who had chanted the Psalter as a child whether or not he had learned to read, and for whom the proposition that the emperor descended from Solomon was not a claim to be assessed but the furniture of the world. The order was his. Its enemies were his enemies. When Menelik called the country to Adwa, this man went.

He also received a genuine benefit that historians of the period sometimes skate past: the end of the Era of the Princes. Eighty-six years of contending warlords, each with an army to feed, had been replaced by one emperor. That was worth something real to a man with a granary.

His cost column was heavy too, and the best contemporary description of it comes from Walter Plowden, the British consul in the middle of the century, whose words on the northern peasantry are quoted by Pankhurst and reach this study at two removes, which is flagged here rather than smoothed over. Plowden's finding was that the peasants bore directly or indirectly the whole burden of taxation and of the large standing armies, and that soldiers were constantly quartered upon them — and then he added the exception that gives this module its title. There were districts, he said, that always turned out *en masse* to resist, and where the troops dare not venture.

Read that sentence with the framework in hand and it is a complete statement of the argument. The floor of force is the entry in the cost column, and the floor is not a uniform thing that covers a country evenly. It thins wherever collection becomes more expensive than the collection is worth. A district that could put every man on the road with a spear was not a district a quartermaster's detachment entered, and so that district was, in a small and unglamorous way, free — not because anyone had granted it a liberty, and not because it had risen and won one, but because the arithmetic of forcing it came out wrong. **The peasant did not create that liberty and could not have. He inherited a terrain, a settlement pattern and a kin structure that made a mob possible, and the state read the sum and went elsewhere.**

Beyond quartering, the northern man paid tithes to the church, dues to his *gult*-holder, and labour on demand; and he was exposed to the *afersata*, the compulsory public assembly at which a district could be required to produce a wrongdoer or bear a collective penalty imposed at an official's discretion — a mechanism still named as a principal grievance when Tigrayan peasants rose at Weyane in 1943. An Amharic

saying collected in the modern literature puts the whole relation in one line: the soldier commits the wrong and the peasant does the recompensing.

And then, in the middle of Menelik's reign, the cost column filled up from a direction nobody had priced. The Great Famine of 1888–92, arriving with rinderpest that killed the plough oxen, fell hardest on precisely this population, and it is treated fully in a later module. Its relevance here is that a subsistence cultivator's real cost column contains one entry larger than anything the state can impose, and that entry is the weather.

Verdict on the northern man: **belief high, benefit real, exit limited, force needed low.** He is the cheap pole, and the empire could govern him with a fraction of the apparatus the south required. He was also, by any material measure, poor and heavily burdened — the Encyclopaedia Aethiopica's observation that comparably oppressive landlord-tenant conditions existed in parts of the north, including Gojjam, should be held throughout what follows. The difference between north and south is not that the north was comfortable. It is that the north's compliance was bought and the south's was compelled.

The southern gabbar

Now the man whose ledger is the reason this study was chosen.

His benefit column has to be examined honestly rather than assumed empty, because a serious accounting looks for the entries that would make compliance rational before concluding there were none.

Four candidates present themselves. First, an end to the wars between the southern kingdoms: Kaffa had annexed the Gimira states and taken tribute from Wolayta, the Gibe kingdoms fought each other over the caravan roads, and raiding was endemic. An imperial peace is a real good and a cultivator feels it. Second, access to markets — the caravan roads secured, and after 1902 a railway reaching Dire Dawa. Third, in principle, a court above the local lord: an appeal to a governor, and beyond him to an emperor with a genuine reputation for judicial attentiveness. Fourth, the possibility of entering the order by baptism, which was open.

Each of those has to be weighed and each comes out thin, and the reasons are specific.

The peace is the weightiest and it is undercut by the empire's own conduct. The regional raiding that stopped was replaced by an imperial extraction that included enslavement on a scale larger than any of the kingdoms had managed. A Wolayta or Kaffa cultivator in the late 1890s did not experience the arrival of order; he experienced the arrival of a bigger raider who then stayed. The market access was real but flowed to

the people with something to sell, and a household surrendering a third to a half of its harvest and two to three days of labour a week has no marketable surplus. The court above the lord was legally real and practically distant: the appeal ran through the very *melkegna* complained of, in a language the complainant frequently did not speak, at a cost in days of travel that a man owing labour on those days could not spend. And the open door of baptism, as the previous module found, admitted individuals of standing and did nothing whatever for a man whose land had become somebody's *gasha*.

So the benefit column is close to empty, and the belief column is worse than empty. A man formed in *gadaa* had installed in him, before he could weigh it, that authority is held for a term and may be removed by an assembly; a man formed in Kaffa had a semi-divine *tato*; a Muslim of Harar or the Gibe had his own account. None of them contained the Solomonic emperor, and the empire — as the previous module established — made no serious attempt to install him. The *neftenya* in the district was not merely an oppressor. He was, by every standard the *gabbar* had been given as a child, **not a legitimate authority at all**.

That leaves the cost column to do the entire work, and it did.

The obligations have been set out already and are restated here as the burden rather than the schedule: two to three days a week of labour on the settler's fields, his house, his fence, his firewood, his grain; a share of the harvest given in the literature at a third to a half and higher in bad districts; renders of honey, butter, chickens, sheep and beer at festivals; porterage on demand; and an obligation that outlived the man it was owed to and passed to his heirs. Enforcement was immediate, local, and armed. The recent study of Limmu Enarea records the garrison soldiers plundering the community's wealth, burning houses, killing, and robbing caravan merchants — one district, one set of oral informants, and consistent with what McClellan collected in Sidama and Gedeo, where he found settlers with nothing to do while local people built their houses, worked their fields and herded their cattle, a condition he characterised as practically slavery.

The countervailing evidence must be given equal weight and it exists. The Encyclopaedia Aethiopica's summary is that the record of the *neftenya* varied widely — some with reputations for gross abuse and arbitrary exploitation, others integrating and cooperating with local people — and that in later years patterns of accommodation and incorporation developed. That is not a footnote. A system of this kind, with no wage, no register and no inspection, has its rate set by the individual in the district, which means the variance between districts is not noise but the actual structure: there was no rate, only ten thousand private rates.

And then exit, which is where this population's ledger differs from every other in the collection.

The *gabbar* could not leave, and the reason is documented rather than inferred. The Limmu study states plainly that *gabbar* there were not permitted to move to the neighbouring Oromo kingdoms, because the garrison soldiers suspected that departing peasants would carry intelligence to those principalities. That is exit closed by explicit armed prohibition, for a stated security reason, by men resident in the district. Add to it the two locks the earlier modules established — that an ensete grove represents years of labour and cannot be carried, and that the available destinations were distant, across country the empire raided, and in the 1890s consisted of the Mahdist Sudan, a British East Africa barely established, and an Italian Somaliland on the far side of the Ogaden.

Social pressure ran, and it ran in both directions. A man's kin and neighbours were the people who would bear the collective penalty if he ran or refused, which converted community solidarity into an instrument of the collector. And the *balabbat* who assessed him was his own man — a notable of his own people, holding a third of the district and his office from the emperor — which meant the pressure to comply arrived in a familiar voice.

Verdict: **belief absent, benefit thin, exit locked three ways, and therefore an enormous amount of cost inflicted.** This is the expensive pole of the framework's gradient, and it is expensive in the precise sense the framework means: it required a permanent armed presence in every district, and it never became cheaper. Fifty years on, it still needed the guns.

The peasant under his own king

Now hold everything else constant and change one thing: whether his ruler submitted before being attacked.

In Jimma, in Leqa Naqamte, in Leqa Qellam and in Beni Shangul, the terms were *qurt gibr* — a fixed annual tribute, paid by the ruler to the empire, in exchange for which he kept his throne, his court, his officials, his law and his religion. There was no measurement, no *neftenya*, no assignment of households. Abba Jifar II of Jimma paid in cash and ivory, kept his Muslim kingdom and its schools, and Jimma was not annexed directly until 1932, nineteen years after Menelik's death.

For the cultivator in those territories, the empire was a distant fact that arrived once a year as a number. He paid what he had always paid, to the men he had always paid, under the law he had been formed to regard as law, in the calendar he had grown up in. His natural leaders were still his natural leaders. His formation was intact and it endorsed the arrangement he was living under.

Which means his compliance was cheap in exactly the way the northern peasant's was cheap, and for the same reason: the belief was doing the work, so the force did not have to. The empire held these territories for decades at almost no cost and with almost no troops.

Two disciplines have to be held here. The first is that this must not be romanticised, and the evidence forbids it. Jimma was one of the great slave entrepôts of the Horn; the Italian traveller Franzoj recorded that enslavement rather than death was the ordinary judicial penalty for murder there, and described two men arriving at Abba Jifar's palace with a cow, one of them chained to it. The local order had its own floor and its own cost column, and a man at the bottom of Jimma was at the bottom of something. Submission bought him a familiar master, not a mild one.

The second is the structural point, and it is sharp. **The published terms of submission that Module 1 identified as the conquest's cheapest military instrument turn out, here, to have been a distribution of the cost column across the entire population for the following half-century.** A peasant in Limmu and a peasant in Jimma, forty miles apart, of the same people, speaking the same language, worshipping in the same way, lived under materially different arrangements for fifty years — because in 1882 one king rode out to submit and in 1886 another did not. Neither peasant was consulted. Neither was born. The single decision that shaped the ordinary life of the largest number of people in this empire was taken by rulers, about their own thrones, before most of the governed existed.

The slave

The framework's ledger has a floor beneath which it stops describing anything, and slavery is beneath it. A slave's compliance is not a calculation, because the two caveats that give the rule its power — what he values, and what threat is credible — have both been foreclosed. He is included in this module not because his ledger can be totalled but because the empire's arithmetic cannot be honest without him.

The scale was very large and the figures are contested. The southern campaigns produced captives systematically: the Wolayta campaign of 1894 and the Kaffa campaign of 1897 are described in the literature as producing many thousands who were distributed and sold across the country, with Pankhurst's finding that Menelik's declared policy against the trade failed in part because he permitted his soldiers to keep their captives. One figure that recurs — eighteen thousand taken from Wolayta, of whom about two thousand went to the emperor — is attributed to a French eyewitness who is reported to have accepted eleven for himself; this study cannot trace that figure

to a checkable source and gives it as a figure in circulation. Caravans ran annually from Jimma toward Shewa and the coast at Zeila.

Set beside that the public words, and the gap is the study's method in one paragraph.

In December 1878 Menelik is reported to have written to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society that he had abolished the slave trade in his whole kingdom and in its borders, for he was a Christian. This study has not verified the text of that letter and reports it as reported; the wording circulates in the secondary and popular literature and its provenance should be established before it is leaned on. In 1889 the Treaty of Wuchale carried an article in which, the slave trade being contrary to the principles of the Christian religion, the King of Kings undertook to prevent it with all his power. In the same year a proclamation against the trade carried an exception for captives taken in war, whose servitude was nominally limited to seven years. Menelik issued further decrees before 1907; the standard assessment is that they had no measurable result, and that his opposition to the trade contributed to the political strife of his last years.

The distinction those instruments turn on is the important one and it is not accidental. **The empire legislated against the slave *trade* and not against slavery.** The trade was the part Europe could see — at the ports, in the caravans crossing to Zeila and the Red Sea, in the consular reports. Possession was invisible from outside. An emperor who needed European recognition and did not need his own cultivators' belief had every reason to suppress the visible half and none to touch the other, and the shape of the legislation follows that interest exactly. This is the seam of the whole study showing through a statute, and it is taken up properly two modules further on.

The pastoralist

Now the natural experiment, and it is unusually clean.

In the Ogaden, the Danakil and the far southern rangelands lived Somali, Afar, Borana and others whose wealth walked. They had no capital a stranger could sit in, no throne to capture, no fields to measure, and a landscape in which a column that followed them ran out of water. Their exit was not a theoretical liberty; it was the ordinary condition of their lives.

Same emperor. Same army. Same rifles. Same decade. Same religion in the conquerors. The single variable that changed was whether the population could leave.

And the empire did not govern them. It raided them, taxed caravans at wells and halts, planted a flag where European maps required one, and left. There was no measurement, no *gabbar*, no *neftenya* settlement, no assessment. The writ in those lowlands remained for decades a matter of periodic punitive columns.

The lesson is not the comfortable one. **A state facing a population that can leave does not moderate its demand and become a gentler master. It loses the population and reverts to episodic robbery.** Exit did not buy the Somali a better deal inside the empire; it bought them exclusion from it, on terms that included being raided. What exit sets is not the fairness of a settlement but its ceiling — the maximum a state can extract before the asset walks — and where the ceiling is at zero, the state does not negotiate downward. It stops trying to administer and starts trying to plunder.

The private soldier

One population remains and it is usually left out, because the literature counts the *neftenya* as the oppressor and stops there. But a private soldier in a garrison town was a common man too, and his ledger is the answer to the question of who actually did the enforcing.

He received one to three *gasha* and perhaps ten to twenty *gabbar* households. He received no pay, no pension, no rations and no ammunition allowance; he was expected to arm himself, and his subsistence came out of the households assigned to him. His benefit was therefore not a wage but other people's labour, delivered to his door, in a quantity that made the difference between a poor man and a comfortable one. His cost of non-compliance — of failing his lord, of losing the grant — was the loss of the whole of it.

That arrangement has a consequence the empire may never have designed and certainly relied on. **The enforcement of this settlement was not performed by the state. It was distributed to some thousands of individually interested men, each armed, each resident in the district he collected from, each of whom would personally lose his living if the arrangement lapsed.** A floor built that way costs the treasury nothing to maintain, which is why an empire with almost no cash revenue could hold a vast conquered territory for fifty years.

It also predicts something for the end of this study, and the prediction should be entered now. A floor the centre never paid for cannot be switched off by the centre. When the *gabbar* system was formally dissolved in 1941, it had to be dismantled against thousands of separate private interests, in districts, one at a time — and the record of how incompletely that was achieved is the reason the land question was still unsettled in 1974.

What the ledger predicted, and what happened

The test of a cost-column reading is whether it forecasts, and this one does, in the least satisfying way.

There was no sustained peasant rising in the conquered south during Menelik's reign. Resistance was fierce at the moment of conquest — Arsi held out for four years, Wolayta beat several columns, Kaffa scorched its own country — and then it stopped. Not because anybody was reconciled; the evidence of grievance is abundant and continuous. It stopped because a functioning apparatus with a weapons monopoly crushes a popular revolt however angry and however numerous, and because every man contemplating one could see that.

The risings that did come, came later and came when something else had moved. Weyane in Tigray in 1943, in the aftermath of the Italian occupation and the disruption of the old administration, with the *afersata* named among the grievances. Bale in the 1960s. Gojjam in 1968. In each case popular energy loaded the lever; in none of them did it work it. The order that was made by violence in the 1880s was ended in 1974 from the hierarchy's side, by an army, and this study will come to that.

Reading the cost column against the framework

Five things, and the third is the module's principal contribution.

One empire ran three cost columns at once, and which one a man lived under was decided before he was born by whether his ruler submitted. The northern *rist*-holder, the *qurt gibr* peasant and the southern *gabbar* were governed by the same emperor under three materially different arrangements, and the variable that sorted them was not ethnicity, religion, geography or productivity. It was a decision taken by rulers about their own thrones in the 1880s. This compounds the settlement finding: the schedule of terms was a military instrument, a record of who resisted, and — the part visible only from the cost column — **a distribution of coercion across the whole population for the following half-century.**

Exit has three independent locks, and this case shows all three closed on one population. The corpus had exit as a function of the destination; this study added, in the first module, that it is also a function of the crop; and Limmu adds the third — an armed prohibition on movement, imposed by the garrison for a stated security reason. A conqueror holding all three has a population that cannot be priced out of his reach at any level of demand, which is precisely the condition under which extraction runs to the survival limit.

Where exit was real, the state did not moderate — it withdrew and raided. The pastoral lowlands are the cleanest controlled comparison in this study, and the result contradicts the hopeful reading of exit that this collection has sometimes allowed to stand. Mobility did not force a better bargain. It made administration unprofitable, and the empire responded not by offering terms but by abandoning government and retaining violence. **Exit sets the ceiling on extraction; it does not create a floor under treatment.** A population that can leave will be either courted or plundered depending on whether it has anything the state wants that can be taken by a raid, and herds can be taken by a raid.

The floor's reach ends where collection becomes more expensive than the collection is worth, and this produces real liberties that nobody granted and nobody won. Plowden's districts that always turned out *en masse*, where the troops dare not venture, are the plainest statement of it in the sources of this period. It is worth naming because it is the humblest and most common form of freedom in agrarian orders and it is invisible in every legal record: not a right, not a charter, not a concession extracted by a rising, but a quartermaster's arithmetic coming out wrong. Any case in this collection that shows a district conspicuously under-taxed should be examined for the cost of taxing it before it is examined for the privileges it holds.

Enforcement distributed to interested individuals is the cheapest floor available, and it cannot be revoked from the centre. The private *neftenya* with ten households and no salary was the actual enforcement mechanism of the southern settlement — personally interested, permanently resident, self-armed, and costing the treasury nothing. That is why a state with negligible cash revenue could hold the south. It is also why the settlement outlived every attempt to reform it: a centre that never paid for its floor has no lever to switch it off, and must buy out or break thousands of private interests one district at a time. The prediction entered here is that the eventual undoing of this arrangement will require either an outside power or a force willing to destroy the beneficiaries rather than compensate them.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. The gravest gap in this module is that almost nothing survives in which an ordinary *gabbar* speaks. The reconstruction rests on oral testimony gathered two and three generations later, by researchers on both sides of a live political argument, in districts where the memory is contested; on European travellers who were guests of the conqueror; and on a court chronicle tradition with no interest in the subject. Plowden's sentence reaches this study at two removes, through Pankhurst and through a modern working paper, and has not been checked against the 1868 text. The Limmu prohibition on movement is from a single recent study built on oral informants and is load-bearing for the exit finding. The 1878 letter to the Anti-

Slavery Society and the eighteen thousand Wolayta captives are both reported rather than verified. And the honest summary of the district-level evidence is the Encyclopaedia Aethiopica's: the record varied widely, some settlers abused and some accommodated, and no general rate existed because there was no mechanism by which a general rate could have been set.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. Plowden's description of the northern peasantry — that they bore the whole burden of taxation and of the standing armies, that soldiers were constantly quartered on them, and that some districts always turned out *en masse* to resist, where the troops dare not venture — is given as quoted by Pankhurst and reproduced in Berhanu Abegaz's working paper on the Ethiopian peasant economy; the original is Plowden's *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country* (1868), which has not been consulted here. Menelik's reported statement to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society of December 1878 is given as reported and is flagged above as unverified. The Amharic saying on the soldier's wrong and the peasant's recompense is reproduced from the same working paper's transliteration and translation.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Richard Pankhurst on peasant living standards, on the failure of the anti-slavery decrees, and on the famine; Richard Caulk on soldiers and peasants; Charles McClellan on the *neftenya-gabbar* system in Gedeo and Sidama; Guluma Gemeda and the recent Limmu Enarea study for the garrison at Kossa, the prohibition on peasant movement, and the conduct of the settled soldiery; Gebru Tareke on the Weyane rising and the *afersata* grievance; Alexander Meckelburg on the sequence of Ethiopian abolitionist decrees; the Encyclopaedia Aethiopica for the assessment that the *neftenya* record varied widely and that comparable landlord-tenant conditions existed in parts of the north; Franzoj as reported in the recent Ethiopian scholarship on slavery for judicial enslavement in Jimma.

Figures. Harvest shares are given at a third to a half with higher figures reported in some districts; labour service at two to three days a week; allocations at one to three *gasha* and ten to twenty households for a common soldier. The Wolayta captive figure of eighteen thousand, with about two thousand to the emperor, is reported and untraced. The Ethiopian Orthodox fasting year is given at approximately one hundred and eighty days for an observant layman. No population figure is given for any of the six groups in this module, because none exists that would bear the weight.

MODULE 6

In Slaves, Ivory and Gold

Extraction: what was taken, from whom, through what machinery, where it went — and why an empire that could not count its own revenue nevertheless minted a coin at the Paris Mint.

The largest stream had no name

Start with the item that never appears in any account of Ethiopian imperial finance, because it is the largest single thing the empire took and there was no instrument capable of recording it.

A southern *gabbar* household owed two to three days of labour a week. Multiply that across the conquered provinces over half a century and the quantity is enormous — ploughing, sowing, harvesting, house-building, fencing, firewood, water, grinding, herding, and porterage on demand — and not one hour of it passed through a treasury, a tax roll, a customs house or a coin. It was extracted at the point of production by the man who benefited, and it was consumed on the spot.

That is the first and governing fact about extraction in this empire: **the greater part of what was taken was never converted into anything, and therefore never became visible to anybody, including the emperor.** An imperial administration that assigns households to individuals has, by that act, given away the possibility of knowing what it is taking. There is no aggregate. There is no series. There is nothing to inspect. This is not an archival gap that better research would close; it is a property of the machine.

What came up the road

What did move — because it had to be sold, or because the centre required it — moved as tribute in kind, and the composition of the tribute is worth setting down exactly.

Beni Shangul and Gubba, on the Sudanese marches, conquered in the 1890s, paid the central government at Addis Ababa in slaves, ivory and gold. Jimma paid Menelik an annual tribute in cash and ivory, and paid it from 1882 without ever being invaded. Wollega under Kumsa Moroda paid in gold and ivory. The southern provinces under direct administration rendered the *asrat*, the traditional tithe of a tenth on agricultural produce, along with demands in kind — coffee, hides, honey, butter, cattle, grain.

Four commodities did the heavy work, and each of them came from ground taken after 1882.

Ivory. The elephant country lay in the south and west, and ivory had long been a royal monopoly in the region — Burton found the export of ivory, ostrich feathers and musk monopolised by the ruling house at Harar before the Egyptians arrived, and the pattern was general. Ivory was the highest-value-per-load commodity a caravan could carry over roads with no wheels, and it was the principal item in which the newly conquered west paid.

Gold. Wollega and Beni Shangul were the gold districts, and their incorporation put alluvial gold into the imperial tribute for the first time in centuries.

Coffee. Coffee is indigenous to the Kaffa forests and takes its name from them. Kaffa fell in 1897, Jimma and Limmu were already paying, and coffee exports rose substantially in the years that followed — the crop that would carry Ethiopia's external trade for the whole of the twentieth century entered the imperial economy through the conquest of the south-west.

Captives. The Wolayta campaign of 1894 and the Kaffa campaign of 1897 produced thousands who were distributed and sold; Beni Shangul rendered slaves as a named item of tribute to the capital; caravans ran annually from Jimma toward Shewa and the coast at Zeila. The tribute schedules and the anti-slavery decrees were issued by the same government in the same decades, and the module that follows this one is about that.

The identity

Now put the two halves together and state the arithmetic without comment, because the comment is the reader's.

Ivory, gold, coffee, hides, civet and captives left the conquered south by caravan for Zeila, Djibouti and Massawa. They were exchanged there with European and Levantine dealers. What came back up the escarpment was rifles and cartridges — the Remingtons, the Gras, the Berdans, the Mausers — and those rifles conquered the next district, which then produced ivory, gold, coffee, hides and captives.

The conquest paid for itself out of the conquered, and the surplus paid for Adwa.

That identity is not a moral claim and it does not diminish Adwa, which was a real victory over a European army and the only one of its kind. It is an accounting statement about where the money came from, and both the heroic reading of 1896 and the colonial reading of the southern campaigns have to be built on top of it rather than around it.

The customs, and the one creditor

Trade was taxed where it crossed a line, and the customs are the part of this system that most nearly resembles a modern fiscal apparatus — which is precisely why they are the exception that proves the module's argument.

The Treaty of Wuchale fixed a single duty of eight per cent on the value of goods for caravans to and from Massawa, collected on Ethiopian territory. Harar, taken in 1887, was the great customs station of the eastern trade, and Ras Makonnen governed it from 1887 until 1906. After 1896 the Djibouti road and then the railway carried the bulk of the traffic, and Menelik granted the railway company the right to levy a ten per cent toll on merchandise it carried.

And then the detail that matters most. **Menelik pledged the Harar customs revenue as security for the interest and repayment of the money he had borrowed from the Italian government.** A conquered city's customs house, hypothecated to a European creditor.

Hold that against everything else in this module. Everywhere else, extraction was assigned rather than collected, unrecorded, unaggregated and invisible. At Harar, where a foreign government held a lien on a named revenue stream, there had to be an assessment, a collection, a remittance and a figure — because somebody with power was going to read it. The apparatus appears exactly where the creditor is and nowhere else.

Money that was not money

The most revealing evidence in this module is about a coin, and it takes a moment to set up because the point is quantitative.

The money of Ethiopia in the nineteenth century was, first, blocks of salt — *amole tchew*, cut to standard sizes and traded as currency, still documented in use as late as 1911 — and second, the Maria Theresa thaler, an Austrian silver coin bearing the portrait of an empress dead since 1780, struck continuously by foreign mints and officially adopted as the standard coin in 1855. Ethiopians called it *birr*, silver, or *talari*. The Indian rupee and the Mexican dollar also circulated in foreign trade.

Menelik had considered issuing his own coinage since 1875, when he was still king of Shewa. Nothing was done until Wuchale, and then an Additional Convention negotiated by Ras Makonnen and signed on 1 October 1889 provided that the Emperor of Ethiopia might issue a currency and that the coins would be struck in the King of Italy's mint. The *talari* became the standard unit on 9 February 1893, and two hundred thousand were struck at the Paris Mint in 1894, divided into twenty *ghersh* or

forty *bessa*. A new coinage followed around 1903. In 1905 Menelik established the Bank of Abyssinia in partnership with the European banking group behind the National Bank of Egypt, and inaugurated it on 15 February 1906.

Now the results.

Around 1900 an observer noted that Menelik's coins circulated only in Addis Ababa and were little known beyond the capital. The first governor of the Bank of Abyssinia found that *birr* constituted **five per cent of the coins in the treasury**. The bank was still importing something like one and a quarter million Maria Theresa thalers annually as the First World War broke out. Pankhurst's summary is that by the end of Menelik's reign the country was still a long way from possessing a truly national currency. Salt was still money in 1911.

And the reason the coin was struck at all is on the record. Menelik's European advisers had convinced him that having his own coinage, together with postage stamps, would be a strong sign of sovereignty — and the men advising him were speculating on the international collectors' market from the beginning.

Read that as an instrument and it is the clearest specimen in this entire collection of an apparatus of statehood that performs no domestic function whatever. It was designed abroad, struck abroad, authorised by a convention with a foreign power specifying a foreign mint, recommended by foreigners as a display of sovereignty, and it did not circulate. Five per cent of the coins in the state's own treasury were the state's own coins. The economy that actually produced the empire's revenue ran on salt bars and a dead Austrian empress, and went on doing so.

The currency was not fiscal policy. It was part of the robe, and its failure to circulate is the proof of what it was for.

The infrastructure, and who owned it

The same reading applies, with a sharper edge, to the one piece of modern extractive infrastructure the empire acquired.

The railway concession was granted on 9 March 1894 — two years before Adwa, and therefore before the prestige that victory conferred — to Alfred Ilg, Menelik's Swiss adviser, and Léon Chefneux. The Compagnie Impériale des Chemins de Fer Éthiopiens was headquartered in Paris. Construction began at Djibouti in October 1897; the first section opened in 1901; the line reached Dire Dawa on 24 December 1902; it did not reach Addis Ababa until 1917, four years after Menelik's death. The concession ran ninety-nine years.

The terms are worth setting out. The French Somali Protectorate granted the company an annual subsidy of five hundred thousand francs. The French government

acquired the right to supervise the security of the line, to fix its charges, to share in profits above a certain level, to confiscate or purchase the railway in certain circumstances, and to inherit the line as far as Dire Dawa — well inside Ethiopian territory — at the end of the concession. Menelik permitted the company a ten per cent toll on merchandise carried.

And in February 1902 the Bonhoure–Chefneux Convention, an eighteen-article instrument settling the subsidy, the territories, the customs charges, the company's borrowing and the fate of the line at the concession's expiry, was negotiated between Frenchmen — and, as the scholarship records, **the French did not inform Emperor Menelik or any of his officials of the negotiations.**

So the only railway in the empire ran on French capital, under French supervision, with French rights to fix its charges and to inherit its Ethiopian section, and its terms were revised behind the emperor's back. The Bank of Abyssinia was capitalised from Cairo and had to be bought out for two hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds in 1931 to make it Ethiopian.

This should be stated flatly because it complicates both of the available stories. Ethiopia was not colonised: it kept its sovereignty, its army, its throne and its right to conquer its neighbours. It was nevertheless subject to the ordinary economic instruments of the age of concessions — the ninety-nine-year grant, the foreign subsidy, the lien on a customs house, the bank whose capital came from another empire's capital city, the toll paid to a Paris company on goods moving inside the country. **Sovereignty is not the same thing as economic independence, and this empire had the first and not the second.**

Where it went, and what never moved

Most of the extraction never reached the centre, and this is the structural fact that makes the empire's finances so hard to describe.

A *ras* assigned a thousand *gabbar* did not collect from them and remit to Addis Ababa. He consumed them. The church's *samon* land supported the church. The *neftenya*'s ten households supported the *neftenya*. The *balabbat*'s third supported the *balabbat*. What travelled to the capital was the residue — the *qurt gibr* tributes from the autonomous kingdoms, the customs, the ivory and gold that were too valuable to consume locally, and whatever a governor chose to send.

What reached the capital went, in order of magnitude, on arms; and after Adwa, on a city. Addis Ababa was built in these years — the palace, the churches, the eucalyptus plantations that solved the fuel problem, the first telephone and telegraph lines, a hospital, a hotel, a mint, a bank, and four schools. It is a real record of construction and

it should be credited as such. It is also, almost item by item, a list of the things a European legation would notice.

Menelik created a cabinet of ministries in 1907, including a minister of finance. It came in the last full years of a reign that began in 1865, and it came after the bank and after the railway. The fiscal state was the last thing this empire built and it was barely begun when its founder died.

Was extraction sorted by caste?

The framework's colonial pattern predicts extraction sorted by caste, and the question has to be put directly because the answer is not simple.

Extraction here was sorted, sharply and durably, into the three columns the previous module set out: the northern *rist*-holder paying tithes and dues but holding a claim nobody could extinguish; the *qurt gibr* peasant paying his own king; and the southern *gabbar* rendering labour and half his harvest to a man with a rifle. The sorting was real, it was heritable in practice, and it lasted until 1974.

But the sorting rule was not descent. It was **conquest status** — what a ruler had done in the 1880s. Gobana Dacche was Oromo and conquered Oromo country; Habte Giyorgis came from the conquered peoples and became war minister; Kumsa Moroda submitted, was baptised, and kept his kingdom; Abba Jifar kept his throne and his Islam and sent troops to help take Kaffa. There was no colour bar, no racial statute, no doctrine of blood. The empire was indifferent to a man's ancestry and interested in his submission.

And yet, after two generations, the distinction had largely stopped mattering at the bottom. The *gabbar* districts were populated by peoples the settler stratum was mostly not drawn from, position was transmitted through land, and land was transmitted by inheritance. So a system sorted in 1886 by a king's decision was, by 1930, a system in which one's grandfather's conquest status and one's ethnicity predicted the same thing with almost the same accuracy — which is why the word *neftenya* became, in the southern usage, effectively synonymous with *Amhara*, though the original settlers had been Amhara, Oromo, Gurage and Tigrayan alike.

A sorting rule that is not racial but is heritable becomes racial in effect within two generations, because the only thing that transmits is the position. That is a proposition the collection should carry, and it is the reason the argument about whether Menelik's empire was "colonial" produces so much heat: the founding mechanism and the lived result point to different answers, and both parties are describing something true.

Reading extraction against the framework

Five things.

Extraction by assignment produces no aggregate, and therefore no possibility of audit — which is not a failure of administration but the whole design. The colonial studies in this collection all produced revenue series, hut-tax returns, labour registers and annual reports, and it is tempting to read those as evidence of superior administrative capacity. This case suggests they are evidence of something else. **Fiscal statistics are an artefact of accountability, not of extraction.** A conqueror who must render an account produces numbers because numbers are the form the account takes; a conqueror who need not, assigns households to individuals and never learns what he has taken. The corollary for method is sharp: a colonial revenue series should be read as a document addressed to someone, and the historian should ask who was meant to read it before treating it as a measurement.

The currency is the collection's cleanest specimen of an instrument cut wholly for the external audience, and its non-circulation is the proof. A coin authorised by a convention with Italy specifying an Italian mint, struck at Paris, urged on the emperor by European advisers as a sign of sovereignty and by men speculating on collectors, which around 1900 circulated only in the capital and made up five per cent of the coins in the state's own treasury, while salt bars remained in use until at least 1911 and the bank imported over a million foreign coins a year. Generalise it as a test: **where a state adopts an apparatus of statehood that performs no domestic function, the apparatus is addressed outward, and the measure of its outwardness is how little it is used at home.** Flags, postage, gazettes, censuses, codes and coinage should all be run through that test in every case in this collection, and the ones that fail it are robe rather than machinery.

Accounting appears exactly where a creditor is, and nowhere else. The Harar customs pledged against the Italian loan is the single point in this empire where a revenue stream acquired assessment, collection and remittance in a form somebody outside could check — and it is the single point where somebody outside had a lien. This confirms the study's organising hypothesis with a correction worth having. The hypothesis was that the bend is produced by having to render an account to a distant constituency. Ethiopia shows that **a creditor is a constituency**: he is distant, he has power, and he will read what he is sent. The mechanism is therefore not specifically about metropoles, taxpayers or parliaments. It is about anyone who can withdraw something the order cannot replace and who will inspect a document before deciding. Wherever such a person exists, an accounting apparatus grows to face him, and the apparatus stops at the edge of his interest.

The conquest financed itself out of the conquered, and Adwa was financed out of the same account. Stated once, without adornment, and left to the reader.

A heritable non-racial sorting becomes a racial sorting in effect within two generations. Because position transmits through land and land transmits through families, a rule written in terms of what a king did in 1886 produces, by 1930, a distribution that maps onto descent — which is why an empire with an open elite, no colour bar and Oromo generals nevertheless left a southern population that experienced the arrangement as ethnic domination and describes it that way now. Both descriptions are accurate about different moments in the same mechanism, and a framework that cannot hold them together will keep mistaking one for a refutation of the other.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. There are no revenue figures in this module because there are none to give: no budget, no series, no returns, and the ministries that might have produced them arrive in 1907. Anyone claiming to state the income of Menelik's empire is estimating. The five per cent figure for *birr* in the treasury, the observer's note that the coins circulated only in Addis Ababa, and the annual thaler import figure all reach this study through reference literature resting on Pankhurst and have not been checked against his text. The pledging of the Harar customs against the Italian loan comes from a single article in a journal of accounting and taxation and is load-bearing for this module's third finding; it should be confirmed before that finding is treated as settled. The railway terms and the 1902 convention negotiated without informing Menelik come from the secondary literature on the Franco-Ethiopian line and have not been checked against the concession documents, which are extant. And the Beni Shangul tribute in slaves, ivory and gold rests on one Cambridge article built partly on oral interviews.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. The Wuchale customs duty of eight per cent is from the treaty text used in an earlier module; the currency dates, the Additional Convention of 1 October 1889, the railway concession of 9 March 1894 and the Bonhoure–Chefneux Convention of February 1902 are given from the secondary and reference literature.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Richard Pankhurst throughout on trade, currency, and the economic history of the period, including the judgment that the country was far from a national currency at Menelik's death; Harold Marcus on Menelik's reign; Herbert Lewis and the recent Jimma scholarship on Abba Jifar II's tribute in cash and ivory; the Cambridge study of slave-trading in Bela-Shangul and Gumuz for the tribute composition of the western marches; the Journal of Accounting and Taxation study of Harari taxation for the pledging of the Harar customs; the

published histories of the Franco-Ethiopian railway for the concession terms, the French government's rights, the 500,000-franc subsidy and the 1902 convention; the National Bank of Ethiopia's own published account and the numismatic literature for the coinage sequence; Burton, as reported in that literature, for the royal monopoly on ivory, ostrich feathers and musk at Harar.

Figures. All are reported and none is a return from a register. The *talari* mintage of two hundred thousand at Paris in 1894; the cumulative mintage by 1915 given as 1,297,830 *birr* and 19,494,308 smaller coins; the *birr* share of treasury coin at five per cent; annual Maria Theresa thaler imports of about 1.2 million before 1914; the railway subsidy of 500,000 francs a year and the ten per cent toll; the buy-out of the Bank of Abyssinia at £235,000 in 1931. The *asrat* is a tithe of one tenth in principle; what was actually rendered varied by district and no schedule survives.

MODULE 7

No Slave-Market in the Capital

Information and suppression: which seams this order had, which of them carried any traffic, what was narrated and what was hidden — and what happened when the concealed half finally surfaced in the wrong hands.

Two seams, and only one of them had a wire

The colonial pattern in this collection predicts a seam split in two by distance: what is hidden from the metropole is what the conquered live, and the order's central administrative task is keeping the two ends from meeting. The prediction assumes a great deal that is worth making explicit. It assumes there is a metropolitan public that would care. It assumes there is a channel along which the conquered's experience could travel to that public — missionaries, journalists, a literate class, a petition, a parliamentary question. And it assumes that the order therefore has to spend effort on interruption.

Menelik's empire had two seams and they were not that pair.

The first ran between Addis Ababa and the European chanceries. It carried enormous traffic, it was managed with great care and considerable skill, and almost everything in this module that looks like information policy was directed along it.

The second ran between Addis Ababa and the southern districts, and it barely existed. Not because it was cut, but because it had never been built. There was no wire.

That distinction turns out to be the whole of this module, and it changes what the framework should be looking for.

The domestic public that did not exist

Consider what a *gabbar* in Kaffa or Arsi would have had to use in order to make his condition known to anybody who could act on it.

There was no newspaper he could read or be read to from. The first Amharic periodical, *Aemero* — the word means something like intellect or mind, and Menelik is said to have chosen it himself — appeared at some point between 1895 and 1902, the sources disagree, and it was four pages, weekly, **written out by hand, in a circulation of twenty-four or twenty-five copies, circulating in the emperor's court.** The acquisition of a copying machine later raised it to about two hundred. Its editor was a

Greek businessman, Andreas Kavadia. That was the entire indigenous-language press of an empire of many millions for the whole of Menelik's reign.

There was no literacy he could use. Reading in this country was Ge'ez-based, church-taught, clerical, and confined almost entirely to the Christian highlands; the southern languages — Oromo, Kafficho, Wolaytta, Sidaamu Afoo — had no orthography, no printing, no scripture in translation and no schools. There was no post, no telegraph he could reach, no court of appeal that did not run through the man complained of, no association, no petition, and no metropolitan parliament to petition, because there was no metropole.

And here is the figure that puts the whole architecture in one line. The largest-circulating periodical in Menelik's Ethiopia was in French. *Le Courrier d'Éthiopie*, founded in Addis Ababa in 1913 by a Frenchman, Alexis Desvages, reached a circulation of around seven hundred — roughly three times the Amharic paper's, in a country where the number of French readers can have been in the hundreds. Before it there was the Lazarists' French bulletin at Harar, later *Le Semeur d'Éthiopie*, moved to Dire Dawa in 1908. The printing presses in the country belonged to French missionaries and a French publisher.

So the information architecture of this empire faced outward, and it did so not by policy but by the ordinary arithmetic of who had presses and who could read.

The framework has to record a correction here, and it is not a small one. There is no evidence in this study of press censorship under Menelik, no licensing regime, no prosecutions for sedition, no suppressed titles. It would be easy — and it would be wrong — to enter that on the liberty side of the ledger. **The absence of censorship is not evidence of freedom where there is nothing to censor.** The instrument that would have had to be suppressed had not been built, and an order that has no domestic public sphere does not need to police one. Any case in this collection that shows an apparent liberty should first be asked whether the corresponding capability existed.

The translator's monopoly

Along the seam that did carry traffic, the decisive fact is that the traffic ran through a very small number of bilingual men, and this is where the study's ideal object sits.

Article XVII of the Treaty of Wuchale, in the Italian text ratified in September 1889, has the King of Kings consenting to avail himself of the Italian government for all his dealings with other powers — *consente di servirsi*. The Amharic text used a permissive construction, reported in the literature as the verb *yichalachewal*: he is able to, he may. And Article XIX certified that the treaty had been drawn in both languages,

that the two versions agreed perfectly with one another, and that both were to be held official and of equal faith.

Two texts. One permitting, one obliging. A clause between them swearing they agree.

Now the asymmetry that made it possible. Menelik did not read Italian. Antonelli read Amharic, and read it well. The interpreter was a man named Yosef. Sven Rubenson, who assembled the original Italian and Amharic texts and drafts and published his study of the article in Addis Ababa in 1964, concluded that responsibility for the divergence lay with Antonelli rather than with Menelik or with Yosef — Antonelli being the one party who could see both texts and could not plausibly have missed what they did and did not say. Others have argued for error or for a convenience that suited both sides. The matter is not closed and this study does not close it.

What the framework can take from it is general and it is not confined to Ethiopia. **In any negotiation where one party reads both languages and the other reads one, the bilingual party holds a monopoly on what the document means** — and the monopoly is invisible, because it does not look like power. It looks like a service. The party that must be translated for will therefore lose systematically in every subsequent dispute about what was agreed, regardless of what was in fact agreed, because the record of the agreement is in a form he cannot audit. Wuchale is the cleanest specimen this collection has, and its consequence was a war.

Menelik understood the lesson and could not solve it. He retained Europeans in the highest positions precisely to hold the seam — Alfred Ilg, his Swiss engineer, became his foreign minister — and it still failed: the Bonhoure–Chefneux Convention of February 1902, which revised the terms of the railway concession, was negotiated between Frenchmen who did not inform the emperor or any of his officials. A monopoly on translation cannot be broken by hiring one of the monopolists.

What Europe was shown, which was nearly everything

The striking thing about the outward seam is how little was concealed along it.

Menelik did not hide the conquest. He advertised it. He announced his victory at Embabo to the European powers in 1882, when it was still a private war between two of Yohannes's vassals. He set out to King Umberto I, in advance of the Harar campaign of 1887, the historical and economic justifications for what he was about to do. He issued the circular of April 1891 defining the boundaries he intended to recover, up to Khartoum and as far as Lake Nyanza. He conveyed to his European counterparts, in Herbert Lewis's characterisation, a sacred civilising mission to extend the benefits of Christian rule to the heathen.

And he let them come and watch. Alexander Bulatovich, a Russian guards officer, rode with Ras Wolde Giyorgis's army through Kaffa and on to Lake Rudolf and published two books about it. Augustus Wylde returned after Adwa to report for the *Manchester Guardian* and wrote *Modern Abyssinia*, which Pankhurst describes as one of the few books of the period written from a broadly pro-Ethiopian standpoint. Vanderheym, Wellby, Gleichen, Merab, de Salviac, Franzoj and a stream of consuls, engineers, missionaries and arms dealers travelled, largely as guests of the emperor or of his governors, escorted and provisioned and shown things.

This is not the behaviour of a man managing a concealment. It is the behaviour of a man managing a *category*. What Menelik needed Europe to accept was not that no conquest was occurring but that the conquest belonged in the same file as theirs — a Christian sovereign extending order among heathens, which was precisely the description under which Britain, France, Italy, Belgium and Germany were doing the same thing. Read against the previous modules, the coin struck at Paris, the postage stamps, the railway concession, the bank capitalised from Cairo, the hospital, the telephone line and the four schools all belong to the same operation. They are the exhibits.

So the concealment, where it existed, was not of the conquest. It was of the settlement.

No slave-market in the capital

One thing was suppressed, and the geography of the suppression is the most precise piece of evidence in this module.

Menelik took repeated public positions against the slave trade across thirty-five years. In December 1878, as king of Shewa, he is reported to have written to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society that he had abolished the trade in his whole kingdom and its borders, being a Christian — a text this study has not verified and reports as reported. The Treaty of Wuchale in 1889 carried an article in which, the trade being contrary to the principles of the Christian religion, he undertook to prevent it with all his power. A proclamation of the same year against the trade carried an exception for captives taken in war, whose servitude was nominally limited to seven years. In 1890 he became a signatory to the Brussels Act, the international anti-slavery convention — and Italy sponsored Ethiopia's inclusion, with the effect that Ethiopia could thereafter legally import arms, since the same Act regulated the arms trade into Africa. Further decrees followed before 1907. The standard assessment of their effect is that they produced no measurable result.

And when he founded Addis Ababa, he made sure that no slave market was held there.

That last fact is the module in miniature, and it should be turned over slowly. It is a real act, and within its boundaries it was effective, and contemporaries noted it approvingly — a British weekly in 1935 was still crediting him with having made a beginning. It is also exactly coextensive with European visibility. The capital was where the legations were, where the consuls walked, where the travellers arrived and from which they wrote home. There was no slave market in Addis Ababa. There were slave caravans from Jimma toward Shewa and the coast at Zeila every year. Beni Shangul and Gubba, conquered in the 1890s, rendered tribute to the central government at Addis Ababa **in slaves**, alongside ivory and gold. The Wolayta campaign of 1894 and the Kaffa campaign of 1897 produced captives in thousands.

Set out the pattern as a rule and it is entirely consistent: the empire suppressed the *trade* rather than the institution, the *market* rather than the possession, the *capital* rather than the provinces, the *ports* rather than the interior. Every one of those distinctions is a distinction between what a European could observe and what he could not.

That is not hypocrisy, or not usefully described as hypocrisy. It is an accurate reading of who was auditing what. **The shape of a concealment is a map of the auditor's field of view, and the shape of a reform is a map of the auditor's stated values.** Europe's declared objection was to slave-trading, publicly conducted; its practical capacity to observe extended to the capital, the ports and the caravan roads. The Ethiopian response matched both contours precisely. And the *gabbar* system — which several European observers would later describe as a form of slavery, and which touched vastly more people than the trade ever did — attracted no decree at all, because nobody in Europe was yet asking about it.

The audit that arrived forty years late

Now the part that makes this module matter beyond Ethiopia, and it can be shown in one institution.

In the British House of Lords in July 1923, in a debate about slavery in Abyssinia, a peer told the House that Menelik, who had died in 1913, had taken a relatively strong line on slavery — a line, he said, corresponding greatly with British feelings and desires — and contrasted it with the disorder that followed his death. That is the outward robe still working, in a foreign legislature, a decade after the emperor's death.

In the same chamber in February 1942, another peer told the House that Tewodros had abolished slavery and that Menelik, who followed, greatly extended it; that Menelik

had joined the scramble for Africa and that his methods were as forcible as those of the worst of the other scramblers; and he cited Lady Simon's estimate of a minimum of two million slaves in a population that might have been ten million, though nobody knew, adding that more than half that population had been subjected by Menelik with rifles supplied by France.

Nineteen years, one institution, two accounts that cannot both be right.

What changed between them was not the facts, which were the same facts. What changed was that in 1935 the Italian government submitted to the League of Nations a memorandum arguing for Ethiopia's expulsion, and the substance of that memorandum was the condition of slavery and the *gabbar* system to which the empire had reduced the populations of its southern half. Fascist Italy assembled the file. Fascist Italy published it. Fascist Italy used it as the justification for invading in October 1935 — and much of the file was substantially accurate.

This is the worst thing that can happen to a concealed truth and the framework should name it. **When a suppressed reality finally surfaces in the hands of a party that wants it as a pretext, the reality is discredited by its carrier, and the people who were harmed by it lose their witness.** After 1935, anybody who described the southern settlement honestly was, whatever his intentions, reciting Mussolini's brief. Ethiopia's defenders — including a great many people of complete good faith, and including the anti-colonial movement worldwide, for which Ethiopia was the one standing proof that Africa could not be taken — were placed in a position where conceding the *gabbar* system meant conceding the invader's case. So they did not concede it. The honest reckoning was postponed by two generations, and when it finally arrived it arrived as ethnic grievance rather than as history, into a country where the argument is now conducted with weapons.

That is a large part of why this historiography is unfinished, why both of the available positions are held with such heat, and why a study like this one has to be written with the care set out at its opening. The delay was not accidental and it was not anybody's fault in the ordinary sense. It is what happens when the audit is captured.

Reading the seam against the framework

Five things, and the first and last are the contributions.

Concealment effort is proportional to channel capacity, not to the magnitude of what is concealed. The colonial bend predicts an order whose central task is keeping the two ends of a split seam from meeting, and the studies of Kenya, Algeria and the rest show real administrative energy going into exactly that — censored despatches, doctored returns, controlled commissions of inquiry, journalists managed

and excluded. Menelik's empire concealed something at least as large and spent almost nothing on concealing it, because the *gabbar* had no channel: no press, no orthography, no literacy, no post, no association, no court that did not run through his oppressor, and no metropolitan public to address, since there was no metropole. **The southern seam was not policed. It was structurally silent.** The generalisation is that an order's visible information apparatus measures the capability of its subjects to be heard, not the magnitude of what it has to hide — and the corollary for the historian is that the quietest orders may be the ones with the most buried, and their quiet is not evidence of anything.

Absence of suppression is not evidence of liberty where the instrument does not exist. Menelik censored no newspapers because the only Amharic newspaper was twenty-five handwritten copies circulating in his own court. Any case in this collection showing an apparent liberty must be asked whether the corresponding capability existed before the liberty is scored.

The translator is the seam, and the party who must be translated for loses every subsequent dispute. Wuchale XVII, with Article XIX certifying that the two texts agreed perfectly, is the collection's cleanest specimen: an asymmetric linguistic relationship in which one side could read both documents and the other could read one, and the resulting monopoly on meaning was invisible because it presented as a service. The mitigation Menelik attempted — hiring Europeans into his own ministries — failed on the same principle in 1902, when Frenchmen revised his railway concession without telling him.

What was narrated and what was hidden divide along the auditor's category system, exactly. The conquest went in the shop window because Europe's own justificatory vocabulary rewarded the conquest of heathens by Christian sovereigns; the slave *trade* was suppressed in the capital, the ports and the caravan roads because that was the part Europe declared it objected to and the part it could see; and the *gabbar* system, which affected far more people than the trade, attracted no decree at all because nobody was yet asking. **A regime's reforms map its auditor's stated values, and its concealments map its auditor's field of view, and the two together are a portrait of the auditor rather than of the regime.**

A delayed audit is captured by whoever wants it as a pretext, and the captured audit poisons the record for generations. The southern settlement was first assembled and published, in 1935, by the government preparing to invade — with the consequence that describing it accurately became indistinguishable from justifying an invasion, and that the two positions available afterwards were both false. This is a general hazard of the seam and the collection has not previously named it. Where a

truth is held out of sight long enough, its eventual disclosure will not be made by a disinterested party, because disinterested parties have no motive to do the work; it will be made by an enemy, and the disclosure will be simultaneously true and unusable. **The cost of a long concealment is not only what was hidden. It is the destruction of the possibility of an honest reckoning afterwards** — and that cost falls, as it fell here, on the people who were harmed in the first place.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. The date of *Aemero*'s founding is given variously as 1895, 1901 and 1902 in the available sources and its circulation figures at twenty-four, twenty-five and later two hundred; all are reported and none is documented here. Menelik's letter of December 1878 to the Anti-Slavery Society remains unverified. The Amharic wording of Wuchale XVII has not been checked against the text, which matters because the argument turns on one verb. The statement that Menelik prevented a slave market in his new capital rests on a contemporary British periodical of 1935 and is paraphrased rather than quoted. The 1935 Italian memorandum to the League is described here from a reproduction of the League document and this study has not assessed the memorandum's contents in detail — an important limitation, since the claim being made is that it was *substantially* accurate, which is a judgment resting on the convergence of that document with independent later scholarship rather than on an examination of the memorandum itself. Wylde's *Modern Abyssinia* is cited for its existence and reputation only; the text has not been consulted, and it would be the single most valuable next source for this module, being a sympathetic British eyewitness of the years immediately after Adwa.

A note on sources. Two parliamentary occasions are used and both are paraphrased with only short phrases quoted: the House of Lords debate on slavery in Abyssinia of 30 July 1923, in which a peer credited Menelik with a line on slavery corresponding to British sentiment, and the House of Lords debate on Abyssinia of 4 February 1942, in which a peer stated that Menelik greatly extended slavery, described his methods as comparable to the worst of the other participants in the scramble, and cited Lady Simon's minimum estimate of two million enslaved in a population perhaps of ten million. Article XVII of the Treaty of Wuchale is quoted in the Italian in an earlier module from the ratified text; its Amharic counterpart and Article XIX are described here rather than quoted.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Sven Rubenson on Article XVII and the responsibility for its divergence; Richard Pankhurst on the history of printing, the press and education, and for the assessment of Wylde; Herbert Lewis for Menelik's presentation of a civilising mission to his European counterparts; Bahru Zewde for the announcement of Embabo and the advance justification of the Harar

campaign; the Encyclopaedia Aethiopica and the reference literature on the Ethiopian press for *Aemero*, *Le Semeur d'Éthiopie* and *Le Courrier d'Éthiopie*; Alexander Meckelburg and the recent scholarship on Ethiopian abolitionist legislation; the Cambridge study of Bela-Shangul and Gumuz for tribute rendered to Addis Ababa in slaves.

Figures. Circulation figures are as reported above and are ranges. Lady Simon's estimate of a minimum of two million enslaved in a population perhaps of ten million is given as it was given in the House of Lords in 1942 — that is, as an estimate offered in a political debate, in a country with no census until 1984, by an author with a declared abolitionist purpose; it is reported here because of who repeated it and where, not because this study can stand behind the number.

MODULE 8

Appoint and Demote

The default: how the arrangement was built so that each man defending his own position defended the whole of it without being asked — and where, when it broke, the break came from.

The question, which is not about the man at the bottom

The *gabbar* was priced two modules ago and he is not the subject here. This module is about the men with standing and means — the princes, the generals, the governors, the bishops, the submitted kings — and it asks the question that the durable hierarchies answer well and the brittle ones answer badly.

Why do men who have every reason to hate each other coordinate to keep an arrangement running?

The answer that distinguishes the long-lived orders is that they are built so that nobody has to be asked. If each man's own position is best protected by the arrangement continuing, then each man defending himself is defending the whole, and the whole is therefore defended by default — with no committee, no ideology, no conspiracy, and no requirement that any two of them be on speaking terms. The order does not need its elite to be loyal. It needs their interests to be arranged so that disloyalty costs them personally.

And the same architecture tells you where the break will come from, because the moment a group with standing and means stops receiving, the identical logic that made it defend the arrangement makes it attack whoever is now holding the distribution.

Ethiopia is a good case for this because it did both things, visibly, inside thirty years, and the record of the break is unusually complete.

Two nobilities with incompatible titles

The architecture starts with a distinction the Ethiopian state had carried for centuries and which Menelik inherited rather than invented.

There were two aristocracies. The **mesafint** — the word is the plural of *mesfin*, prince — were the hereditary nobility, holding standing by birth and descent, powerful in their own regions, and forming the top of the ruling class. The **mekwanint** were the appointed nobles: men granted specific offices in the government or at court, frequently of humble birth, and forming the bulk of the aristocracy by number.

The two were ranked against each other by a rule that states the whole difference. A *mesafint* took precedence over a *mekwanint* of the same rank. Ras Mengesha Yohannes, son of an emperor, outranked Ras Alula Engida, who was of humble origin and had won everything he had — even though both were *ras*.

Now read that as a design rather than as etiquette, because it is the most important structural fact in this module. **The emperor could make a *mekwanint*. He could not make a *mesafint*.** One aristocracy held its standing from him and would lose it if he fell; the other held its standing from its ancestors and would not. Every emperor's personnel history is therefore the management of that asymmetry: buy, marry or beat the hereditary men, and manufacture as many of the appointed ones as the treasury of offices allows.

Appoint and demote

The instrument had a name. *Shum-shir* — appoint and demote — was the Amharic term for the process of changing men's positions at the emperor's or king's will, and Donald Levine's account of it is the standard one. Governorships were held at pleasure. *Ras* appointments were rotated to prevent men putting down roots in a province. Titles were conferred and could be withdrawn.

Set that beside the settlement two modules back and the pyramid is complete and consistent from top to bottom. A *ras* held his governorship at the emperor's pleasure. He held his *gult* from the emperor. Beneath him a *melkegna* held his *maderia* — land in lieu of salary — in principle revocable. Beneath him a *neftenya* held one to three *gasha* and ten to twenty households, and would lose them if he failed his lord. Beneath him a *balabbat* held his third, and his office, from an appointment.

Every man of standing in this empire held what he had on a lease, and the renewal ran upward. That prices defection for the entire administrative and military class in a single stroke, without moving a soldier, and it is the cheapest coordination device available to any apex. It also explains why the empire could be held with negligible cash revenue: it paid in positions, and positions cost nothing to issue and everything to lose.

There was a defect in it and the earlier modules have already located it. A lease that is never called in becomes a freehold. *Maderia* hardened into property, obligations passed to heirs, and the tap tightened as the century turned. But under Menelik, in his vigour, the lever worked.

The men who ran it, and where they came from

Now the evidence that this module turns on, and it should be set out plainly and left standing, because it is uncomfortable for every party currently arguing about this period.

Ras Gobana Dacche was an Oromo. He was Menelik's principal commander in the southern conquest, he conquered Oromo country for a Shewan king, he broke Gojjam's army at Embabo in 1882, and he was one of the most powerful men in the empire.

Fitawrari Habte Giyorgis Dinagde was born around 1851 at Chabo in south-western Shewa, of Oromo and Gurage descent — the accounts vary between Gurage, Oromo, and mixed, and the variance is flagged. He was **captured during Menelik's southern campaigns**, entered the imperial service, and rose to be Minister of War from 1896 until his death in 1926 and President of the Council of Ministers. His horse-name was Abba Mala. He fought at Adwa. And in 1916 he led the army that deposed an emperor.

Ras Mikael of Wollo was an Oromo and a former Muslim, converted — the accounts say under duress — who became *negus* of Wollo, the most powerful man in the empire in the two years after Ras Tessema's death in 1911, and the father of Menelik's designated heir.

Ras Makonnen Wolde Mikael was Menelik's cousin, governor of Harar from 1887 to 1906, the empire's principal diplomat, and the father of the man who became Haile Selassie.

And beneath the great men, the submitted kings kept their thrones: Abba Jifar II of Jimma, a Muslim, ruling until 1932; Kumsa Moroda of Leqa Naqamte, baptised as Gabra Egziabher and made *dejazmach*; Jote Tullu of Leqa Qellam.

The order of battle at Adwa is the demonstration in one afternoon: Gojjam's Amhara infantry and cavalry under Tekle Haymanot; the Tigrayan army under Mengesha Yohannes and Alula; Makonnen's Harar army of Amhara, Oromo and Gurage; Wollega cavalry; Agaw and Amhara from Wag and Lasta; the Gondar army; and a central force of Shewan Amhara, Mecha and Tulama Oromo cavalry, Gurage, and Taytu's Yejju.

The coordinating class of this empire was not an ethnic group. A man taken captive in the conquest of the south became its Minister of War for thirty years and the maker of its emperors. That fact cannot be absorbed by the account in which this was European colonialism with a different complexion, and it cannot be absorbed by the account in which the conquest was a benign reunification either — because the same empire that put a captive in the war ministry left the *gabbar* with nothing, and both

things are true at once. **The elite was open and the base was sealed**, and this study will keep saying both in the same breath because saying either one alone produces a falsehood.

What actually held them

The glue was not sentiment. It was a set of specific holdings, each of which a specific man would lose if the arrangement fell.

Land from the emperor. *Gult* and *maderia* over districts, granted from above, revocable in principle.

Title from the emperor. For the *mekwanint*, which was most of them, the title *was* the standing.

Office at pleasure, and rotated. A governor who entrenched was moved.

Marriage. Menelik married Taytu of the Gondarine and Yejju houses to buy the north. He betrothed his daughter Zewditu to Yohannes IV's son. Lij Iyasu was married first to Romanework Mengesha — daughter of Ras Mengesha Yohannes, granddaughter of Yohannes IV, niece of Taytu — a marriage annulled unconsummated, and then in April 1910 to Seble Wengel Hailu, daughter of Ras Hailu of Gojjam. Every one of those is a treaty in the form of a wedding.

A country each. This is the largest item and the earlier modules have already traced its origin. Yohannes IV paid Tekle Haymanot with the title *negus* of Kaffa — a kingdom Tekle Haymanot did not hold and would have to conquer — and gave him eight thousand rifles to make it good. Menelik did the same thing on a larger scale for twenty years. Ras Wolde Giyorgis was appointed governor of Kaffa *before* he took it. Makonnen got Harar. Habte Giyorgis got Borena, and Mecha and Jibat as a reward. **The southern frontier was the currency in which the coordinating class was paid, and every great man in the empire had a province he had personally acquired and would personally lose.**

The church's cut. *Samon* land came out of every measured district from the first surveys; Ras Gobana is reported to have ordered two gashas from every administrator's holding to go to priests and *debtera*. The clergy were shareholders in every conquest, and the significance of that will land at the end of this module.

Set those together and the default is visible. Nobody had to like anybody. Negus Tekle Haymanot fought Menelik's army at Embabo in 1882, was wounded, captured and sold back for ten thalers according to tradition — and in 1896 he brought his Gojjame army to Adwa. Ras Mengesha Yohannes was the son of the emperor Menelik had displaced, rebelled repeatedly, and fought at Adwa. **Men with excellent reasons for hatred coordinated because each one's holdings rested on the same structure,**

and a man defending his province was defending the empire whether or not he intended to.

Where the break came from

The framework says fracture arrives from a group with standing and means that has stopped benefiting. Three candidates present themselves and they are instructive in ascending order.

Tigray is the standing grievance. Mengesha Yohannes was *mesafint*, son of an emperor, with a claim of his own, holding the province that had held the throne in 1889 and lost it. He rebelled, submitted, rebelled again, and died in confinement in 1906. Tigray's standing was permanently reduced by Menelik's accession and never restored; the southern spoils went to Shewans and to Shewa's clients, and Tigray got nothing out of the conquest that made every other great house rich. That is a group with standing whose benefit had been cut, and it produced exactly what the framework predicts — repeated revolt, contained by force and by the province's poverty. It is the fracture that did not quite happen, and the reason it did not is worth noting: Tigray had standing but was running out of means.

Taytu is the sharp case, and the most instructive thing in this module, because it shows the default inverting in less than two years.

From 1906 Menelik began to suffer strokes — one at Debre Libanos on 11 June 1908, a massive one on 28 October 1909 — and the exercise of imperial power passed to the empress. What she did with it was entirely rational from her position and fatal to the arrangement. She used the appointment power on behalf of her own kin and connections, most of whom were northerners, some of whom had claims of their own to the throne and many of whom resented Shewan dominance. She called on the Tigrayan chiefs. She intrigued to substitute her stepdaughter Zewditu, or her nephew Ras Gugsa Wolle, for Menelik's designated heir. She insisted that the foreign legations address their questions to her rather than to the regent Ras Tessema. She stopped work on the railway.

Look at what that does to a Shewan *mekwanint*'s ledger. His title, his province and his land were held from the imperial power. As long as that power was distributing to men like him, defending his own holdings and defending the arrangement were the same act. The moment the power began distributing to Yejju and Gondarine kinsmen instead, the two came apart — and defending his own holdings now meant taking the tap away from whoever was holding it.

The result was immediate and it is described in exactly these terms in the sources: a number of nobles organised in an ever-closer alliance against her, and in a palace

revolution in March 1910 she was removed from power. She took no further part in government and died in 1918.

That is the framework's proposition demonstrated inside eighteen months, and it establishes something the collection should carry: the default does not degrade. It inverts. The very contingency that manufactures loyalty — your position is held from the centre — manufactures a coalition against the centre the instant the centre stops delivering to you, and it does so with the same speed and the same lack of deliberation. Nobody had to be persuaded. Each man read his own ledger.

Iyasu is the full break, and it came six years later.

Lij Iyasu was Menelik's grandson through his daughter Shoaregga, and his father was Negus Mikael of Wollo — the Oromo, the convert from Islam. Menelik named him heir on 15 May 1909 and made it public in October. He was never crowned. Between 1913 and 1916 he governed, and he turned in a direction that emptied the ledgers of the men who had made the conquest: toward the Muslim populations of the east and south, toward Harar and the Somali and Afar, toward Germany and the Ottoman powers during the war. Whether he converted to Islam is disputed to this day, and the charge was extremely convenient for the men who made it; what is not disputed is that appointments, attention and favour were moving away from the Shewan Christian nobility and away from the church.

On 27 September 1916, while Iyasu was at Harar, a council of nobles and high clergy assembled in the capital under the leadership of Fitawrari Habte Giyorgis and charged him with apostasy. **The Abun released the nobles from their oath of loyalty.** Iyasu was deposed and excommunicated. Zewditu — Menelik's daughter — was proclaimed Empress, and Ras Tafari Makonnen, son of Ras Makonnen of Harar, was made regent and heir to the throne.

Negus Mikael marched south for his son with an army. On 27 October 1916 he was defeated at Segale by Habte Giyorgis and Ras Kebede Mengesha. Paul Henze calls Segale the greatest battle in Ethiopia since Adwa. The strengths reported — a hundred and twenty thousand against eighty thousand — are uncited in the available sources and should be treated as impressions rather than counts.

And then the repair, which is as revealing as the break. Ras Tafari, the new regent, was married to Menen Asfaw — a granddaughter of Negus Mikael, the man his party had just destroyed.

What 1916 proves

Three things, and each of them settles a question the earlier modules left open.

The defect written into the settlement's founding clause came due, exactly as predicted, twenty-seven years after Wuchale. The grant bought armed service. The emperor's army had no existence apart from the contingents his lords brought. Therefore the army that defended the emperor was the army that could remove him, and in 1916 the Minister of War personally commanded the force that destroyed the emperor's father. That is the medieval bargain's standing liability arriving on schedule, and it is the same fault that will run again against Ras Hailu and Ras Gugsa in the following decades and that will be running still in 1974.

The church was a shareholder in the coalition, not a servant of the throne — and that is why its act worked. The Ethiopian church was never controlled by the emperor. Its head was an Egyptian Copt appointed in Alexandria and purchased at real cost. It had opposed Menelik's four schools so effectively that he had to import Egyptian teachers to get them open. It held its own land, drew its own revenue, and answered to a patriarch outside the country. It was also endowed out of every district measured in the south from the 1880s onward.

In 1916 it spent its single irreplaceable asset — the power to bind and to loose an oath — on the nobles' side, and by doing so converted a mutiny into a lawful act. Men who had sworn to Iyasu could not simply break the oath; the *abun* dissolved it, and the deposition became not treason but the removal of an apostate.

An owned priesthood could not have done that, because the word of a priesthood the emperor controls is worth exactly what everyone knows it is worth. The independence that made the church inconvenient to Menelik — the foreign bishop, the separate revenue, the obstruction over schools — was the same independence that made its blessing worth having when the arrangement needed defending. **The seam must be independent enough for its word to count and interested enough to give it, and an apex that captures its priesthood outright has traded a real instrument for an echo.**

The arrangement survived by discarding its own head, which is the signature of a default that is working. In thirteen months the elite deposed an emperor, excommunicated him, fought the largest battle since Adwa against his father, and installed a new sovereign and a new regent. And it changed nothing. The settlement stood. The *qalad* measurements stood. The *gabbar* obligations stood. The *samon* endowments stood. The titles, the provinces and the distribution stood. The men who removed Iyasu were the men who held those things, and they removed him in order to keep them.

The test of whether a default is working is not whether the apex is stable. It is whether the apex is disposable. An arrangement in which the removal of the ruler

threatens the settlement has not achieved the default; an arrangement in which the ruler can be removed on a Wednesday and nothing else moves has achieved it completely. By that test Menelik's construction was a success, and its success is measured precisely by the ease with which his own designated heir was thrown away.

The coalition that was not Ethiopian

One further member of the arrangement deserves recording, because it complicates the picture in a direction the study's organising question requires.

While Menelik lay paralysed, the European powers with interests on his frontiers reached an understanding among themselves about their respective positions in the event of disorder in Ethiopia. This study has not verified the terms of the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 and states only what is not in dispute: that Britain, France and Italy coordinated their Ethiopian policy with one another during Menelik's decline, and that each of them preferred a stable Ethiopia they could deal with to a partition that would set the three of them against each other.

That is a default too, and Ethiopia's survival was partly a product of it rather than of anything Ethiopian. The audience whose recognition Menelik had spent thirty years courting was itself an arrangement whose members defended it by defending their own positions — and one of the things each of them was defending was the absence of the other two from Addis Ababa.

Reading the default against the framework

Five findings, and the first two are the contributions.

An open elite at the top is very often a symptom of the apex's need for dependants, not of generosity — and it is perfectly compatible with a sealed base. The two-nobility architecture gives an emperor one lever against a hereditary aristocracy he cannot unmake: manufacture a rival aristocracy that exists only while he does. But that lever only works if the appointed men can be recruited from *outside* the hereditary class, because a *mekwanint* drawn from a great house brings his house's standing with him and is not dependent at all. **The apex therefore needs men who are nothing without him, and the deeper he must reach to find them, the more open his elite will appear.** Habte Giyorgis was valuable to Menelik precisely because he had been a captive, had no lineage that could sustain him, and could be unmade as easily as he had been made — and he became Minister of War for thirty years and deposed an emperor. This is the structural reading of an open elite, and the collection should apply it generally: where an order recruits its highest servants from its most

powerless populations, look first for an entrenched hereditary class the apex needed a counterweight against. It says nothing whatever about how the order treats the powerless in the mass, as this one demonstrates.

The default does not degrade — it inverts, and the switch is the distribution tap. Twenty years of Shewan loyalty rested on a single fact: positions were held from the centre and the centre distributed to Shewans. When Menelik's strokes transferred the exercise of that power to Taytu and she began distributing to her northern kin, the same self-interest that had produced coordination produced a coalition against her in under two years, with no ideology and no deliberation, because every man read his own ledger and got the same answer. **The mechanism that makes an elite defend an arrangement by defending itself makes it attack the arrangement by identical reasoning the instant the arrangement stops delivering to it, and there is no intermediate state of weakened loyalty.** Which means the diagnostic for any long hierarchy is not how loyal its elite appears but who currently controls distribution and whom they are distributing to — and a succession crisis is dangerous not because the ruler is dying but because the tap changes hands.

A bought-in seam is worth more than an owned one, and the proof is the release of the oath. The Ethiopian church was endowed by the arrangement and controlled by nobody in it. In 1916 that combination produced the operative act of the whole break: the dissolution of an oath, which no emperor's chaplain could have performed with any effect. An apex that captures its priesthood outright converts a witness into a spokesman and loses the ability to be legitimated by it. The condition for a seam to be useful in a crisis is that it be independent enough to be believed and interested enough to appear.

A frontier is the ideal currency for paying a coordinating class, and this case shows why: it is issued by the apex, costs the treasury nothing, is collected from strangers, and cannot be spent twice. Every great man in this empire held a province he had personally taken. The consequence — which the collection should note as a hazard rather than a virtue — is that such an elite is bound to the arrangement only while the frontier lasts. By 1900 the frontier was closed: Kaffa taken, the far south flagged, the boundaries fixed by treaty with Britain, France and Italy. **The generation that came of age after 1900 was the first Ethiopian elite with no country of its own to conquer**, and it is precisely that generation which produced the crises of 1910, 1916 and after. When the currency runs out, the men who have not been paid begin looking at the holdings of the men who have.

The test of a default is the disposability of the apex. Menelik's arrangement discarded his designated heir, excommunicated him, fought a great battle against his

father, and left the settlement untouched — which is the strongest evidence in this study that what he built was a working order rather than a personal ascendancy. It also sets the terms for the module on collapse: an arrangement of this kind will not be moved by anger from below, and will not be moved by the removal of a ruler, because it has demonstrated that it can absorb both. It will move when the men who hold the positions stop being paid.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. Habte Giyorgis's origins are given variously as Gurage, Oromo, and mixed Oromo–Gurage, and the claim that he was taken captive during the southern campaigns rests on the reference literature citing Lapiso; the dates of his appointment as chief minister are given as 1906, 1907 and 1909 in different sources. The figures for Segale — a hundred and twenty thousand against eighty thousand — are explicitly uncited in the sources consulted and are almost certainly impressions. The account of Taytu's conduct in 1909–10 comes principally from hostile sources: the men who removed her, and the European legations she refused to see, and this study has found no substantial account written from her side, which is a real distortion in a module that uses her as its central example. Whether Lij Iyasu converted to Islam is contested and the accusation was made by the party that benefited from it; this module deliberately rests its argument on the redistribution of favour rather than on the religious charge. And the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 is referred to without its terms having been verified.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module, and the absence is worth noting: the internal politics of this elite were conducted orally, by messenger and at court, and what survives is the court chronicle tradition, the reports of foreign legations, and later reconstruction. Where a European legation is the source for a court event — as it largely is for 1909 to 1910 — the reader should remember that the legations were themselves parties, and that Taytu had cut them off.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Donald Levine for *shum-shir* and for the *mesafint/mekwanint* distinction and the *bala seltan*; Harold Marcus for Menelik's reign and the succession; Bahru Zewde for the political history of 1906–16; Paul Henze for the assessment of Segale; the Encyclopaedia Aethiopica and the standard reference literature for the titles, the offices, and the careers of Gobana Dacche, Habte Giyorgis Dinagde, Mikael of Wollo, Makonnen Wolde Mikael and Tessema Nadew; the published accounts of the Adwa order of battle for the composition of the contingents.

Dates. Menelik's strokes are dated 1906, 11 June 1908 and 28 October 1909; the designation of Lij Iyasu to the ministers, 15 May 1909; Taytu's removal, a palace revolution in 1910, given as March or April in different accounts; the death of Ras

Tessema Nadew, 1911; Menelik's death, 12 December 1913; the deposition and excommunication of Iyasu, 27 September 1916; Segale, 27 October 1916. The Council of Ministers is dated to late 1907 in most accounts and to 1906 in some.

MODULE 9

The Right Hand and the Left

Liberties: what protection existed against the state apparatus, who actually made it and in whose factional interest, what it took to be more than words — and what this order destroyed that was better than anything it kept.

The question, and the two columns

The question is not whether the emperor was kind. It is whether a person under this order had any protection from its apparatus — whether he could bring a claim, be heard, speak, be shielded — and, if so, where that protection came from and what made it worth more than the parchment.

The framework's answer to the second half is unsentimental and this module will test it. Protections are not created by the people who most need them. A peasant has no leverage; leverage is what a protection is made of. Protections are won by factions inside the hierarchy who have standing and means, who want something, and who are bargaining from a position where the apex would rather concede than fight — and once conceded, the concession leaves a residue that outlasts the fight and can be picked up later by people who had nothing to do with it. So the diagnostic is: find the liberty, then find the faction, then find the quarrel.

And this module carries a second obligation the collection has not always insisted on. **Foreclosure has to be counted in the same ledger as plurality.** An order that adds a court and destroys an assembly has not made a net gain, and writing only the first column produces a lie.

What there was to be protected from

Set out the apparatus first, briefly, because a liberty is only measurable against a threat.

Flogging was the ordinary punishment, and it remained so. Amputation of a hand and a foot stood among the penalties for offences against the state, as Bulatovich recorded from what he was shown of judicial practice in the 1890s. Imprisonment meant chains. Enslavement was a judicial penalty in Jimma, where Franzoj found it applied for murder in place of death. The *afersata*, the compelled public assembly at which a district might be required to produce a wrongdoer or bear a collective penalty imposed at an official's discretion, hung over every northern village and was still being

named as a principal grievance by Tigrayan peasants in 1943. In the south, a *neftenya* set his own assessment and enforced it with a rifle, and there was no register, no inspection and no rate.

There was also, and this matters more than it looks, no public prosecutor. Until a law established the office in 1943, prosecution on the government's behalf was customarily performed by the administration of the prisons — that is, by the men holding the accused.

Four things that were real

Against all of that, four protections operated, and each of them repays close reading.

The chain. The Amharic term is *qwäräññña*, from the word for bound, and the practice was this: a man with a claim chained the right hand of the man he accused to his own left hand, or to a relative's, and the two of them stayed chained until a judge heard the matter.

Consider what that instrument is. A man with no money, no rank, no advocate and no literacy could compel the physical presence of a man who had all four, using nothing but a length of iron and his own body, and neither of them could go about his business until somebody adjudicated. It is crude. It was certainly abused — a malicious claimant could immobilise an innocent man for days. And it is one of the most genuinely equalising procedural devices in this collection, for a reason the framework should hold onto: **the cost of compelling appearance was borne by the claimant's own liberty, which means the right required no apparatus at all and therefore could not be denied by one.** No clerk had to issue anything. No officer had to be willing. No fee had to be paid. The plaintiff supplied the enforcement out of his own person.

It survived Menelik's entire reign. Lij Iyasu attempted to end it and failed; the custom continued to the end of his rule. It was finally prohibited in the great codification under Haile Selassie, when Ethiopia acquired a Criminal Procedure Code in 1961 and a Civil Procedure Code in 1965 drafted on European models.

The direction of that travel deserves to be stated flatly, because it recurs across this collection. **The modernising state abolished it.** The chain was untidy, it embarrassed the country before foreigners, and it belonged to no ministry. What replaced it was a summons, which requires a functioning court, a serving officer, a literate claimant and a state willing to act — every one of which the man holding the chain had done without.

The appeal, and the way the emperor's court was run. Yohannes IV divided the empire into six judicial districts, each with two *womber*, judges of appeal. Menelik

established courts of first instance in those districts. Above them stood the *afe negus* — the mouth of the king — chief justice, charged with administering justice according to the *Fetha Nagast*, with three court levels beneath him presided over by the governors of the respective administrative levels. Capital cases were reserved to the emperor. And above everything sat the *zufan chilot*, the crown court, in which the emperor in person reviewed cases on grounds of equity. The standard account of the period is that before the Second World War anybody dissatisfied with a lower court could in principle carry his case as far as the emperor.

The procedure of that court is the remarkable part, and it is preserved in Blaten Geta Mahteme-Sellassie's description. Every person present was invited by the usher to give his opinion. **Those standing spoke first** — and in a court like that, the men standing are the men without a place to sit. Then those seated gave their opinions, beginning with the lowest in rank and ascending. Then the judges, in their order of rank. Then the *betwededs* and *dejazmaches*. Then, last of all, the *afe negus*. Everyone remained standing throughout except the emperor, who listened. The learned then read out the relevant provision of the *Fetha Nagast*, translated it, and interpreted it for the public.

Read that as a mechanism rather than as ceremony. An assembly in which the powerful speak first is an assembly that has stopped collecting information, because everyone below them then knows the answer and says it. An assembly in which the humblest speak first, on the record, before anyone senior has committed himself, is an assembly built — by design or by accretion, and the sources do not say which — to prevent deference from manufacturing unanimity. **A body that makes its juniors speak first is doing something structurally different from one that does not**, and this collection should recover the speaking order wherever the sources permit, because it distinguishes a court from a ratification.

The caveats are heavy and must be given their weight. The appeal ran upward through the very officials complained of. The proceedings were in Amharic and the law in Ge'ez. The journey took days a man owing two or three days of labour a week could not spend. And the whole apparatus was thickest where the *rist*-holding, Amharic-speaking, Orthodox population lived, and thinnest in exactly the districts where the abuse was worst.

The wager. Ethiopian procedure contained a device called *wərrəd*: each party offered to pay the judge a stated sum if his own testimony proved false, which obliged his opponent to match the offer and raise it. It is a costly-signal mechanism built into the rules of pleading — a man who knows he is lying must decide how much he will pay for the lie in front of the court, before judgment.

The church. The Ethiopian church was endowed by the state and controlled by nobody in it: its head was an Egyptian appointed in Alexandria, its land was its own, its revenue was its own, and it could and did obstruct the emperor. What that independence was worth was demonstrated in September 1916, when the *abun* released the nobles from their oath of loyalty to Lij Iyasu. That is a real constitutional check — an institution outside the state, capable of dissolving an obligation the state could not dissolve — and it was exercised, once, decisively.

Who made them, and in whose quarrel

Now run the framework's question against each.

The **court hierarchy** was not built for peasants. Yohannes IV divided the empire into judicial districts as part of the same programme by which he reduced the political weight of regional rulers, and Menelik continued it. **A right of appeal is a centralising instrument before it is a liberty.** Its purpose is to ensure that a *ras* is not the last word in his own province — that is, to take something from the hereditary nobility and give it to the crown. The peasant's ability to carry a case upward is a by-product of a quarrel between the emperor and his governors, and it exists because the emperor's interest in not being the second-most-important man in Gojjam was permanent.

That is precisely why it lasted. A protection that serves a powerful faction's structural interest survives the faction's individual members; a protection that serves only its beneficiary does not survive its first inconvenience.

The **church's** protections were bought, and the price is recorded in earlier modules: *samon* land out of every measured district in the conquered south, and an emperor obliged to send abroad and pay for a bishop he could not appoint. The church's independence was not a concession to piety; it was the residue of the fact that no Ethiopian emperor could control the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, and of the fact that the clergy were made shareholders in the conquest. What it produced, in 1916, was the one instrument that could turn a coup into a lawful act.

The **northern peasant's *rist*** is the oldest residue in the country and it was made by nobody's decree. It is the accumulated product of centuries of litigation by a landholding class defending its claims against lords in a country where no lord could survey and no crown could register. It benefits the northern cultivator because he stands inside a descent group with a claim, not because anyone conceded him anything — which is why it did not travel south with the conquerors, and why a *gabbar* had none of it.

The **chain** was granted by no one, which is the whole of its significance and the reason it outlived the rest.

Where anyone below nobility was let in

The framework says that where a person under the nobility is admitted, a factional fight was being served. This case supplies four instances and each of them fits.

Habte Giyorgis Dinagde, taken captive in the southern campaigns, became Minister of War for thirty years and President of the Council of Ministers. The fight he served was the emperor's standing quarrel with the hereditary *mesafint*, and the previous module set out the mechanism: an apex facing a nobility he cannot unmake manufactures a second nobility that exists only while he does, and he must recruit it from men with no independent standing. Habte Giyorgis was admitted because he had nothing.

The *neftenya*: common soldiers admitted to the landholding class, one to three *gasha* and ten to twenty households apiece. The fight: how to garrison a conquered territory with no treasury. They were let in because the alternative was paying them.

The *balabbat*: conquered notables admitted to the administration and confirmed in a third of their district. The fight: how to collect from a population whose language the collectors did not speak. They were let in because the alternative was governing without intermediaries.

The Council of Ministers, established in late 1907 by an emperor whose health was failing, to manage affairs of state and, in practice, his succession. It was made by an apex for an apex's convenience. And by September 1916 it was the body that, with the high clergy, deposed an emperor — and it governed under Zewditu afterward, with Habte Giyorgis at its head until 1926.

That last one is residue in the exact sense the framework means. **An instrument created to serve a ruler acquires standing of its own, outlives the purpose it was made for, and becomes a constraint on the office that made it.** Nobody in 1907 intended to create a body capable of removing an emperor. By 1916 it was one.

The other column

Now the foreclosure, and it has to be given at least equal weight, because on any honest accounting it is larger than everything above.

The *gadaa* order that this empire conquered contained, as its ordinary constitutional furniture: fixed terms of office; mandatory rotation every eight years, with no possibility of extension; a general assembly at fixed places and fixed intervals at which any man might speak; a scheduled review of the ruling council's performance at the midpoint of its term; and a power vested in that assembly to remove the *abba*

gadaa and install a replacement if he had failed to uphold the constitution, the laws, the custom, or the moral order.

Term limits. Rotation. An assembly with a right of speech. Scheduled review. Impeachment.

That is a fuller set of structural protections against arbitrary power than anything in the Christian highland order, which had a right of appeal and a chain and no mechanism whatever for removing a bad ruler short of killing him.

And it was foreclosed. The evidence, flagged already in an earlier module and flagged again here because a great deal rests on it, is Atseme's statement that Menelik outlawed the major *caffee* assemblies in the Oromo areas he conquered, and Lambert Bartels's finding that *gadaa* was progressively deprived of its political and judicial powers and reduced to a merely ritual institution. Both reach this study through advocacy-adjacent literature and neither has been traced to an archival original.

The ledger for this order therefore reads, in two columns: an empire possessing a right of appeal, a self-enforcing procedural chain, a court that heard its juniors first, and an independent church, conquered a people possessing term limits, an assembly and an impeachment procedure — and ended the second without extending the first. The *gabbar* got neither. He lost the assembly and did not receive the appeal in any form he could use.

Neither of the available political accounts is comfortable with that sentence and both should have to sit with it.

Why the assembly died and the appeal lived

The framework predicts the asymmetry exactly, and the prediction is worth stating because it generalises.

The imperial protections that survived — appeal, church independence, *rist*, the chain — each had somebody inside the arrangement whose position they served. The emperor needed appeal because it demoted his governors. The church needed its independence and had land to defend it with. The northern landholding class needed *rist* and litigated for it for centuries. The chain needed nobody, which is why nobody could take it.

The *gadaa* liberties had no such constituency after 1886. No *ras*, no *melkegna*, no *balabbat*, no bishop and no *neftenya* held a position that the eight-year rotation protected. They were not examined and rejected; they were simply the constitutional furniture of a defeated faction, and there was nobody left inside the arrangement with standing and means for whom their survival was worth anything.

A liberty survives a conquest if and only if some faction of the conquerors finds a use for it. That is a bleak proposition and this case states it about as cleanly as any case could. It also carries a practical implication for anyone reading a conquest's aftermath: the customs that survive are not the ones the conquered valued most, but the ones that happened to be useful to somebody above them — which is why the surviving fragments of a defeated order are such an unreliable guide to what that order was.

What made any of it more than words

The test this module was written to apply is the last one, and it resolves into a single question: **who bears the cost of enforcement?**

Where the beneficiary can enforce a right himself, it is real and nearly indestructible. The chain is the specimen: it cost the state nothing, required no official's willingness, and was paid for out of the plaintiff's own immobilised body. It took a modern codification commission with foreign draftsmen to end it.

Where a faction with means will spend to enforce a right, it is real for as long as that faction's interest holds. The *abun*'s power to loose an oath was real because the church had land, revenue, an external appointing authority, and something to lose in 1916. Appeal to the emperor was real for a northern *rist*-holder because the emperor wanted his governors overruled.

Where enforcement would cost the state a great deal and cost the beneficiary nothing, the right is words. The 1906 proclamation requiring every six-year-old boy and girl in Ethiopia to attend school, on pain of the parent's estate passing to the government, is the clearest example in this study: an instrument of universal compulsory education, backed by confiscation, which produced four schools and a few hundred pupils in seven years. Nobody with standing needed it enforced. Nobody's position depended on it. It was a real intention and it remained a sentence.

And where the beneficiary must travel four days in a language he does not speak to petition the superior of the man beating him, the right is not words exactly — it is worse, because it exists, and its existence is cited as evidence that the arrangement is just.

Reading plurality against the framework

Five findings.

A right of appeal is a centralising instrument before it is a liberty, and that is precisely why it endures. Yohannes IV and Menelik built the court hierarchy to strip

regional lords of finality, not to shelter cultivators; the shelter was a by-product. But by-products of structural quarrels are the most durable rights there are, because the quarrel is permanent while any individual's gratitude is not. **The collection should look, behind every long-lived procedural protection, for the institutional rivalry it was actually built to serve** — and should expect that the rivalry, not the beneficiary, explains the survival.

The most robust liberty in this order was the one nobody granted, and the durability of a right is inversely related to the apparatus it requires. *Qwäräññña* needed no clerk, no fee, no officer and no permission, and it therefore could not be withheld; the emperor who tried to abolish it failed, and only a state with a codification commission and a foreign-drafted procedure code succeeded. The uncomfortable corollary, and this collection has met it before in other forms: **modernisation destroys the self-enforcing liberties first**, because they are the ones that look like disorder to an administrator and like embarrassment to a government being watched from abroad. What replaces them is always better on paper and always requires a state that is willing.

Speaking order is a diagnostic and should be recovered wherever the sources allow. The *zufan chilot* took opinions from those standing before those seated and from the lowest rank upward, with the chief justice last and the emperor silent throughout. Whether that was designed or accreted, its effect is to prevent deference from producing unanimity — it extracts the information of the humble before the powerful have told them what to think. A body in which the great speak first is not gathering anything.

Foreclosure belongs in the same ledger, and the liberties that die are the ones with no faction behind them. This empire conquered a constitutional order with term limits, mandatory eight-year rotation, an assembly of general speech, scheduled review and impeachment, and dismantled its political layer while keeping an order whose own protections were thinner. That did not happen because anyone weighed them. It happened because **a liberty survives a conquest only where some faction of the conquerors finds a use for it**, and no one in the imperial arrangement held a position that the *abba gadaa*'s removability protected. The general lesson is that the surviving fragments of a defeated order are a poor guide to what that order contained, since the selection principle is the conqueror's convenience.

An instrument made for an apex outlives the apex and constrains the office. The Council of Ministers of 1907 was created by a dying emperor to manage his own affairs; nine years later it deposed an emperor and governed the country. This is what residue looks like from the inside, and it is why concessions extracted in factional fights matter beyond the fight: nobody designs a constraint on themselves, and constraints

nevertheless accumulate, because every instrument that is durable enough to be useful is durable enough to be turned around.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. The *chilot* procedure is reconstructed from Mahteme-Sellassie's account and from the *Ser'ate Mengist*, both reaching this study through a secondary legal-history literature, and neither has been consulted in the original; how far the described order of speaking was practice rather than protocol cannot be established here, and the finding built on it is correspondingly provisional. The prohibition on *qwäräñña* and Lij Iyasu's failed attempt to end it come from a single article citing Bahru Zewde. The claim that anybody could carry an appeal to the emperor before the Second World War is a statement of principle found in the legal-history literature and this study has found no evidence of how often a southern cultivator did so — the honest answer is probably almost never, and the module's caveats should be read as heavily as its findings. The outlawing of the *caffee* assemblies rests, as before, on Atseme via the Oromo studies literature and on Bartels, neither traced to an original, and it carries the whole of the foreclosure column.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. The *chilot* procedure, the order of speaking, the reading and interpretation of the *Fetha Nagast* in open court, and the roles of the *afe negus* and the *womber* are given as reported in the Ethiopian legal-history literature. The term *qwäräñña* and the description of the practice as chaining the right hand of the accused to the left hand of the accuser or a relative are given as reported in the recent scholarship on the Haile Selassie codification.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Stanley Fisher on traditional Ethiopian criminal procedure; the Ethiopian legal-history literature on the courts established by Yohannes IV and Menelik II, the *afe negus*, the *zufan chilot* and the *Fetha Nagast* in practice; Bahru Zewde on *qwäräñña* and on Lij Iyasu; Blaten Geta Mahteme-Sellassie Wolde Meskel, as reported in that literature, for the conduct of the crown court; the recent scholarship on the Great Codification for the abolition of *qwäräñña* and the sequence of codes from 1957 to 1965; Asmarom Legesse and Lambert Bartels for the *gadaa* assembly, its review and removal powers, and its reduction under imperial administration; Gebru Tareke for the *afersata* as a grievance in 1943; Alexander Bulatovich, paraphrased, for the judicial penalties he recorded.

Dates. The court hierarchy under Yohannes IV, from the 1870s and 1880s; courts of first instance under Menelik, without a firm date in the sources consulted; the Council of Ministers, late 1907 in most accounts and 1906 in some; the release of the oath and the deposition of Lij Iyasu, 27 September 1916; the office of public prosecutor established by law, 1943; the Criminal Procedure Code, 1961; the Civil Procedure Code, 1965.

MODULE 10

To Eat and Drink as They Did

Change: why the arrangement could not be moved by the people it was built on, which of the four cracks actually opened it, and how the settlement of 1889 was finally undone by the one clause its makers thought they had solved.

What the earlier modules already narrowed

This module has less work to do than it looks, because the preceding ones have already closed most of the doors.

The floor was a weapons monopoly obtained on credit from rival European suppliers and written into treaty as an exclusive right of import. The settlement paid its enforcers in other men's land and other men's labour, which meant the enforcement was distributed to thousands of individually interested, individually armed men resident in the districts they collected from. The *gabbar* had no belief in the arrangement, no material benefit from it, and no exit — the crop would not move, the destinations were distant, and in Limmu the garrison forbade departure outright. The coordinating class was bound by holdings each man would personally lose. And in 1916 that class demonstrated, in the most conclusive way available, that it could throw away an emperor without disturbing a single thing about the settlement.

So the question of how this order changed answers itself by elimination before any research is done. **A cultivator with a hoe was never going to take anything from a state with a hundred thousand rifles**, and the record confirms it with a monotony that is itself the finding: after the conquest was completed, the southern peasantry — the most exploited population in the empire, with the clearest grievance and by far the largest numbers — produced no rising that came within a hundred miles of altering the arrangement, for eighty years. Anger was the constant. The variable was elsewhere.

The four ways a floor cracks are fracture, exhaustion, conquest by a rival elite, and the overproduction of claimants. This case supplies all four in sequence, and the last one is the interesting one because the fault it exploited was written into the settlement's founding clause in 1889 — and because the man who tried hardest to repair it made it fatal.

Three tests, and what each of them proved

1916 was a fracture, and it changed nothing. The elite deposed an emperor, excommunicated him, defeated his father at Segale in the largest battle since Adwa, and installed Menelik's daughter and Ras Makonnen's son. The *qalad* measurements stood. The *gabbar* obligations stood. The *samon* endowments stood. The titles and the provinces stood. A fracture at the top of a working arrangement replaces the man and confirms the machine.

1930 was the same thing again, and it also changed nothing. Ras Gugsa Wolle — Taytu's nephew, the man she had wanted on the throne — rose against the regent and was defeated and killed at Anchem on 31 March 1930. Empress Zewditu died two days later. Tafari Makonnen was crowned Haile Selassie I on 2 November 1930 and granted a constitution in 1931 that declared the imperial dignity to descend without interruption from the line of Menelik I. Ras Hailu of Gojjam, the last of the great provincial magnates, was deposed and imprisoned in 1932. The settlement was untouched. What had happened was a redistribution of position within the coordinating class, which is what fractures do when the floor beneath them is intact.

1935 to 1941 was conquest by a rival elite, and it is the only thing before 1974 that moved the settlement at all. Italy invaded in October 1935, occupied the country, and was expelled with British assistance by 1941. And the *gabbar* system was formally dissolved in 1941.

That deserves a moment, because it is uncomfortable in every direction. The arrangement that eighty years of Ethiopian politics had not disturbed was ended, formally, in the aftermath of a foreign invasion — an invasion justified to the League of Nations in 1935 partly on the grounds of that very system, by a fascist government, in a document that was substantially accurate and entirely cynical. And the dissolution was formal rather than actual: what was abolished was the legal obligation, while the land stayed where it was, which is precisely what Module 5 predicted. **A floor the centre never paid for cannot be switched off by the centre.** The *neftenya*'s descendants kept the *gasha*. The *gabbar*'s descendants became tenants on it, paying rent instead of rendering labour, which for most of them was a change in the name of the thing. The land question was still open thirty-three years later, and it was the question that ended the monarchy.

What Haile Selassie did to the founding clause

Now the part that decides everything, and it is a case of a repair that worked and then killed the patient.

Module 2 identified the defect in the settlement's founding clause and named its consequence in advance. The grant bought **armed service**. A *neftenya* held land in order to be a rifleman; a *ras* held a province and brought its contingent. Menelik's field army had no existence apart from the retinues his lords brought to it. That is the medieval tenurial bargain, and its standing liability is that the army which defends the king is the army that can remove him — which is exactly what happened in 1916, in 1930, and in the provincial revolts between.

Haile Selassie set out to fix it and largely succeeded. Across the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s he built what Ethiopia had never had: a centralised, salaried, professional national army, trained in part by foreign missions, paid in cash from a treasury, with a Ministry of Defence above it and no lord between the soldier and the state. He built a salaried civil bureaucracy alongside it. He stripped the provincial magnates of their military functions, replaced hereditary governors with appointed officials, and by the 1950s had produced something that would have been unrecognisable to Menelik: an emperor whose power did not depend on any nobleman bringing men.

And he did **not** take their land.

That is the whole of it. The great families kept their estates, and the *neftenya*'s descendants in the south kept their *gasha*, and the church kept its *samon*, and all of them were converted, over three decades, from armed grantees into landlords. What had been a single class holding land in exchange for force became two classes: one holding land and no force, the other holding force and no land.

Read that against the framework and the outcome is nearly deducible. The settlement of 1889 had bound its beneficiaries to the arrangement by making each of them personally responsible for defending it — which was dangerous, because it meant they could turn the same weapons on the centre, but which also meant that the men with the guns were the men with the property, and their interests could not come apart. **Haile Selassie severed the two halves of that bargain. He kept paying in land and stopped requiring service; and he paid for service in cash instead.** The result was a propertied class that could no longer defend itself and an armed class with no stake in the settlement whatever.

A man in the Third Division at Harar in 1970 held nothing under the arrangement of 1889. No *gasha*, no *gabbar*, no *gult*, no title. He had a salary, and the salary was set by a ministry, and the ministry was run by men whose families held the land his salary did not buy. He had precisely one thing the landholders did not have, and by 1974 he was the only person in Ethiopia who had it.

An over-committed floor

The second condition arrived at the same time, and it is the classic one.

By the early 1970s Ethiopia had roughly forty-five thousand soldiers. About a third of them were in Eritrea fighting a secession that had been running since the early 1960s. Others were suppressing revolts in Bale, in Sidamo and in Gojjam — the Bale rising had run from 1963 to 1970, and the Gojjam tax revolt of 1968 had forced the government to withdraw a measure. The army was fighting one war of secession and three internal insurgencies simultaneously, with a force that would have been small for the task in a country a quarter the size.

Then the arithmetic moved underneath it. The oil price shock of 1973 fed an inflation that ran straight into a fixed military wage. And the drought and famine in Wollo and Tigray in 1973 killed something on the order of a hundred thousand people — the figure is reported and should be treated as an estimate — while the government denied that it was happening, until the denial became an international scandal.

That is the cost column emptying, and it is worth being exact about **whose** cost column. Not the peasant's; his had been full since 1886 and had not moved. It was the ledger of the men holding the rifles. Their pay was falling against prices, they were dying in Eritrea, they were being used to shoot Ethiopians in Bale and Gojjam, and they could see the imperial establishment denying a famine. Junior officers and senior non-commissioned officers, in Britannica's summary, blamed the imperial elite for their own impoverishment and for the country's condition. **The men who were the floor had begun to price their own compliance, and the sum was coming out differently.**

The twelfth of January

It began with food and water.

On 12 January 1974 the rank-and-file soldiers of the Fourth Brigade at Negele Borana, in the far south — in the country Menelik's armies had taken seventy-five years earlier — mutinied over bad rations and the lack of drinking water. They arrested their brigade commander and their officers. The emperor sent his personal envoy, Lieutenant-General Deresse Dubale, to negotiate and pacify them. **They seized him, and forced him to eat and drink as they did.**

There is no better single image in this study of what a repricing looks like from the inside. It is not a manifesto. It is a general at a table being made to consume the ration.

On 10 February technicians and non-commissioned officers at the main air force base at Debre Zeyit mutinied and held their officers hostage in a mess tent for three

days. On 14 February the students came out. Then the teachers, over an education sector review. Then the taxi drivers, over the fuel price. Then the labour unions, demanding wages indexed to prices and pensions. Then, in April, Muslims demonstrating for equality of religious standing. The demands accumulated across the spring: human rights, agrarian reform, price controls, free schooling, release of political prisoners.

On 27 June 1974 representatives of the mutinying units constituted themselves as the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army — the Derg, which means committee. Major Mengistu Haile Mariam of the Third Division at Harar was elected chairman. In July it obtained from the emperor the power to arrest not only officers but government officials at every level, and it used it: two former prime ministers, most of two cabinets, most of the regional governors, senior officers and court officials went to prison. In August, when a constitution creating a constitutional monarchy was put to the emperor, the Derg began dismantling the imperial government to forestall it.

On 12 September 1974 Haile Selassie was arrested and deposed. On 23 November sixty officials were shot at Kerchele prison, including two former prime ministers, the Derg's own first chairman General Aman Andom, and the emperor's grandson.

And in 1975 came the measure that ended the settlement of 1889: Proclamation No. 31, which abolished private ownership of rural land altogether. Not reform, not redistribution with compensation, not the dissolution of an obligation — the abolition of the category. The date is given variously in the sources and this study does not attempt to fix it beyond the year.

What the peasants and the students actually did

The framework's hard claim requires that the popular energy be given its exact weight, neither inflated nor dismissed, and this case makes the distinction unusually easy to draw because the popular movement is so well documented and so plainly insufficient.

The students had been demanding land reform since February 1965, when they marched under the slogan *Land to the Tiller* — the phrase that would title the 1975 proclamation. They kept marching for nine years. The peasants of Bale fought from 1963 to 1970 and were crushed by the army. The peasants of Gojjam revolted over taxes in 1968 and forced a withdrawal of the measure, which is a real achievement and also the outer limit of what popular pressure achieved in this order: a tax was rescinded, and nothing structural moved. The Eritreans had been fighting since the early 1960s and were still fighting in 1974 and would fight for seventeen more years.

Every one of those was present, loud and unresolved for a decade before 1974, and every one of them was contained by the same army. What changed in January 1974 was not their volume. It was that the army stopped being willing to be the containment.

So the students supplied the vocabulary — *Land to the Tiller* is their phrase, and it became the law of 1975. The labour unions supplied the general strike that paralysed the capital. The famine supplied the moral collapse of the emperor's standing. The taxi drivers supplied the streets. All of that is real causal weight and none of it is the agent. **The proximate agent was a committee of majors and sergeants, and the reason it was them is that they were the only people in Ethiopia holding organised force.**

The confirmation is in what happened next. Having taken the state, the Derg did not hand it to the students; it shot them, in the Red Terror of 1977–78, in numbers running into the tens of thousands. Having proclaimed land to the tiller, it sent the students to the countryside to implement a measure they had not written. The crowd that walks into the gap does not get to keep the room.

Reading change against the framework

Five findings, and the second is this module's contribution.

All four cracks appear in this case, in sequence, and only two of them moved the settlement. Fracture in 1916 and 1930 replaced the apex and confirmed the arrangement. Conquest by a rival elite in 1935–41 produced the formal dissolution of the *gabbar* obligation and nothing else, because the occupier could abolish a legal duty but the land stayed where it was. Exhaustion — an army over-committed across four campaigns, on a wage collapsing against a 1973 inflation, in a country whose government was denying a famine — is what opened 1974. The order of magnitude is worth stating: **the crack that finally worked was the one that reached the men who held the rifles, and none of the others did.**

The founding clause was severed in the twentieth century, and severing it is what killed the order. This is the finding the earlier modules set up and it should be stated in full. The settlement of 1889 paid its beneficiaries in land in exchange for armed service. That bargain carried a permanent civil-war risk, which is why it produced 1916, 1930 and the provincial revolts — but it also guaranteed that **the men with the property and the men with the guns were the same men**, and an arrangement in which those two coincide cannot be attacked from within by anyone who is not already a beneficiary. Haile Selassie spent thirty years correcting the risk: he built a salaried professional army and a salaried bureaucracy, took the military function away from the landed families, and left them their land. He thereby produced, for the first time in Ethiopian history, a propertied class with no capacity for violence and an

armed class with no property. **A settlement survives while its beneficiaries are its enforcers. Separate the two and the arrangement acquires an enemy that is inside the state, is paid by it, and is the only body in the country capable of taking anything.**

The generalisation the collection should test elsewhere is precise and counter-intuitive: the modernisation of a fiscal-military state — replacing tenurial service with a cash-paid professional army — is not the elimination of the medieval defect. It is the **concentration** of it. Under the old arrangement there were a dozen lords, each able to rebel, none able to win alone, all of them checking each other; that is why 1916 and 1930 were containable. Under the new one there is a single army, and when it fractures there is nothing on the field to oppose it. Menelik's fault was distributed and survivable. Haile Selassie's repair made it singular and terminal.

A repricing is legible at the level of rations, and looking for a programme will make you miss it. The Ethiopian revolution begins with soldiers complaining about food and water in a garrison town in the far south, and taking the emperor's envoy and making him eat what they ate. There is no ideology in that act, no land reform, no Marxism — those arrive later and are supplied by other people. What is in it is a cost column being recalculated by men who had noticed that the arrangement they enforced was not feeding them. **The tell of an order about to move is not a manifesto but a mutiny over provisions**, and any forecast that watches for programmes will be reading the wrong document.

Popular energy loads the lever and does not work it, and the proof is what happens to the crowd afterwards. Nine years of student marches produced the slogan that became the 1975 proclamation; the peasants of Bale fought for seven years and were crushed; Gojjam won a tax rescission and nothing else; the general strike paralysed the capital. All real, all causally loaded, none of it proximate. And having taken the state on the strength of that energy, the Derg shot the students in their tens of thousands within three years. **The crowd that walks through the gap does not keep the room, and an order that changes hands by force changes hands to whoever holds the force.**

Module 2's prediction about undoing came true in its strongest form. That module argued that a settlement enforced by thousands of individually interested private beneficiaries cannot be reversed by a decision at the centre, and that its undoing would require either an outside power or a force willing to destroy the beneficiaries rather than compensate them. Both happened. The outside power came in 1941 and abolished the obligation without moving the land. The force willing to destroy rather than compensate came in 1975 and abolished the category of private rural property

altogether — the only measure that could reach a settlement made with a rope in the 1890s, because nothing narrower could reach past the thousands of separate holdings it had hardened into. **The totality of the 1975 proclamation is a measurement of how completely the 1889 settlement had been privatised.**

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. The Wollo famine death toll of around a hundred thousand is a reported estimate in a country with no census before 1984 and should be held loosely; a fuller treatment belongs to the next module. The army strength of forty-five thousand and the proportion in Eritrea come from Britannica's summary and have not been checked against a return. The date of Proclamation No. 31 of 1975 is given variously in the sources consulted and is left at the year. The characterisation of Haile Selassie's military and administrative reforms as having severed service from tenure is this module's own reading, assembled from the standard political histories rather than from a study that makes the argument in these terms, and it is the module's central claim; it should be tested against the specialist literature on the imperial army before it is relied on. The account of what the mutineers thought is drawn from Britannica's characterisation and from the published chronology, not from testimony.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. The Negele Borana mutiny of 12 January 1974 — the grievance over food and drinking water, the arrest of the brigade commander and officers, and the seizure of Lieutenant-General Deresse Dubale with the demand that he eat and drink as the soldiers did — is given from the published chronology of the revolution and is reported rather than quoted.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Bahru Zewde and the standard political histories for the sequence from 1916 to 1974; Britannica's summary of the reign for the army's dispositions and the character of the mutinies; the published chronology of the Ethiopian Revolution for the events of January to September 1974; Gebru Tareke on peasant revolt in Ethiopia, including Bale and Gojjam; John Markakis on the imperial state's class structure. Theda Skocpol's account of revolutions as arriving when a state breaks under fiscal-military strain, and Jack Goldstone's on elite overproduction, are used as they are used in this collection's own theory papers and are credited there.

Dates. Anchem, 31 March 1930; the death of Zewditu, 2 April 1930; the coronation of Haile Selassie, 2 November 1930; the constitution, 1931; the deposition of Ras Hailu, 1932; the Italian invasion, October 1935, and the restoration, 1941, in which year the *gabbar* system was formally dissolved; the attempted coup of the Imperial Bodyguard under the Neway brothers, 13 December 1960; the student march under *Land to the Tiller*, February 1965; the Bale revolt, 1963–1970; the Gojjam tax

revolt, 1968; the Negele mutiny, 12 January 1974; the Debre Zeyit mutiny, 10 February 1974; the formation of the Derg, 27 June 1974; the deposition of Haile Selassie, 12 September 1974; the executions at Kerchele, 23 November 1974; the land proclamation, 1975.

MODULE 11

The Evil Days

The accounting: what the sword took, what the metabolic note took, why the two cannot be separated in this case — and why the forgetting was complete on one side of the arrangement and never began on the other.

What the accounting is for

An arrangement that lasts long enough stops looking like an arrangement. By the 1960s a tenant in Sidamo paying rent to a landlord whose grandfather had been given ten households and a rifle was not living inside a conquest. He was living inside the way land worked. Nothing in his week announced that the boundaries of the field had been fixed by a rope dragged across the district in the 1890s, or that the man he paid held it because an ancestor had marched south with Ras Wolde Giyorgis. The origin had become the furniture of the world, which is what origins do when nobody disturbs them, and it is exactly what makes an order cheap to run.

This module disturbs it. Not to indict anybody, and not to produce a number that can be carried into an argument — the last section will explain why a confident total would be a weapon rather than a finding — but because the framework requires that the violence which made a settlement be counted before the settlement is assessed. An armed group took power, held it for a hundred and nine years, and was destroyed. This is the bill.

It comes in two columns, and the second is much larger than the first.

The sword

Take the conquest first, and take it knowing at the outset that **no aggregate exists and none can be constructed.** That is not an archival misfortune. It follows directly from the way this empire worked: an order that extracts by assigning households to individuals produces no returns, and an army that pays itself out of the districts it passes through files no casualty reports. There is no muster roll for any battle in this study, on either side. The figures below are travellers' estimates, later scholarship, and oral tradition.

Embabo, 6 June 1882. The battle that opened the southern frontier was fought between two of Yohannes's own vassals. Reported dead: something over nine hundred

on each side, with more than a thousand wounded on each, and about four thousand Gojjame prisoners. The near-symmetry invites suspicion of a tidied record.

The Arsi campaigns, 1882–1886. Four years of fighting, repeated Shewan defeats, and then Azule on 6 September 1886, where an Arsi attack on an entrenched position with modern rifles produced Arsi dead estimated at between six thousand and over twelve thousand, against minimal Shewan losses. The twelve-thousand figure is Abbas Haji Gnamo's, citing among others Bahru Zewde. What followed at Anole — the cutting of hands and breasts — rests on Arsi oral tradition, is denied by a substantial body of opinion, and has been set out at length in an earlier module with the evidence on both sides; it cannot be quantified here and this study will not pretend otherwise.

Chelenqo and Harar, January 1887. Twenty to twenty-five thousand Shewan troops with breech-loaders against three to four thousand Hararis with matchlocks. About a hundred Shewan dead and six or seven hundred wounded; about a thousand Harari dead. Then the sack: Jules Borelli recorded the city plundered and half its population fled. Harari tradition remembers three hundred Qur'anic memorisers and seven hundred newly married men, and gives grooms a cloth called *satti baqla* — seven hundred — to this day.

Wolayta, December 1894. Bahru Zewde describes it as among the bloodiest campaigns Menelik fought. A figure of around a hundred and eighteen thousand dead and wounded circulates in the literature; this study cannot trace it to a checkable source and reports it only as a figure in circulation. Large numbers of captives and enormous quantities of cattle were taken. The accounts do not even agree on whether the king was executed or spared.

Kaffa, 1897. Three armies plus a contingent from Jimma. The last *tato* ordered his own kingdom's grain and houses destroyed to starve the invaders, which failed, and was hunted through his own hinterland for six months before being taken on 10 September in silver chains. No casualty estimate for the population is available.

The margins. Beni Shangul, the Ogaden, Borana, and Wolde Giyorgis's march to Lake Rudolf in 1898. Bulatovich, who rode with that column, recorded that it cost the Ethiopians a few hundred dead and a few thousand cartridges. What it cost the people it passed through is not recorded anywhere, by anyone.

Adwa, 1 March 1896. Ethiopian dead between about three thousand nine hundred and seven thousand; Italian and Italian-officered *ascari* dead around six thousand, with nearly four thousand taken prisoner. Some hundreds of the captured Eritrean *ascari* are reported to have been mutilated as traitors, by amputation of a hand and a foot; this study has not verified the accounts or the number and flags the claim rather than repeating a figure.

Segale, 27 October 1916. The largest battle since Adwa, fought between two factions of the same elite. The reported strengths are uncited in the sources consulted and no casualty figure can be given.

Set beside those the things that cannot be entered in a column at all. The captives: thousands from Wolayta, thousands from Kaffa, slaves rendered as a named item of tribute to Addis Ababa from Beni Shangul, annual caravans from Jimma to Zeila, and a mortality on the roads and in the barracoons that nobody recorded because nobody had an interest in recording it. The deaths from the extraction itself, which are invisible by construction: a household surrendering a third to a half of its harvest does not die at a battle, it dies in the second bad year, and there is no document. And the pastoral margins, raided for decades by columns that reported what they took and not what they left.

The metabolic note

Now the second column, and it is very much larger.

The framework's proposition is that coordination and intensive agriculture lift a population above the natural carrying capacity of its land, and that the excess is a debt: when the coordination is disrupted, the note is called and the payment is made in famine and epidemic. The question for every case is whether the mechanism applies, and here it applies with a precision that also requires the framework to be amended.

The northern and central Ethiopian highlands carried a large population by a specific technology: the ox-drawn scratch plough, worked on terraced fields, growing teff, barley and wheat — an implement with no equivalent in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, and the reason this plateau supported the density it did. **The ox is the capital of that system.** A highland household without a pair of oxen does not farm less; on any scale that matters it does not farm at all, because human muscle cannot break that soil in the weeks the rains allow.

Between 1887 and 1889 rinderpest entered the Horn in cattle accompanying Italian military expeditions arriving from India at Massawa. It spread inland, peaked in Ethiopia between 1889 and 1892, and killed on the order of eighty to ninety-five per cent of the cattle. Italian observers documented approximately ninety per cent mortality, including some two hundred and fifty thousand head from Emperor Menelik's own herds; rates approaching ninety-five per cent are reported among the Borana. The same panzootic went on to reach the Cape by 1897 and is one of the largest animal-mortality events on record.

Then everything else arrived at once: drought, locusts, caterpillars, and epidemics of smallpox, cholera and typhus falling on a population already starving. The result was

kifu qan — the evil days — the Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888 to 1892, which is commonly estimated to have killed up to a third of the population of the country. Across the frontier, the Sudan famine of the same four years killed something on the order of a million and a half people. Steven Kaplan's study of the Beta Israel shows the demography, the settlement pattern and even the religious structure of one people permanently altered by it. Ethiopian popular explanation attached the catastrophe to the death of Yohannes IV in 1889, which is what an order does with a disaster it cannot otherwise account for.

Here is the amendment the case forces, and it is a real one. **The metabolic note was called, but it was not called by the disruption of coordination.** Ethiopian coordination was not disrupted in 1888. The state functioned, the church functioned, the *rist* system functioned, the terraces stood, the seed existed, and the knowledge of how to farm was entirely intact. What was destroyed was the **capital stock that the coordination operated**. An ox-plough civilisation without oxen is a fully working set of institutions attached to nothing.

So the framework should carry two distinct triggers rather than one: a metabolic debt may be called by the **disruption of the coordination** — conquest, revolution, administrative collapse — or by the **destruction of the capital the coordination requires**, which can happen while every institution remains standing. The second is faster than the first, and it is easy to miss in a political history, because nothing political has changed and the archives register a good administration presiding over a mass death.

The disentanglement, which nobody wants

Now the hard part, and it is the module's central analytical act.

The most-cited demographic claim about Menelik's conquest is that it halved the Oromo population — the figure of ten million reduced to five, given by the French Capuchin Martial de Salviac in *Un peuple antique au pays de Ménélik*, published in Paris in 1901, and echoed in Bulatovich's remark that something near half the population of the conquered country perished. It is the number from which the widely repeated figure of five or six million deaths derives, and it is central to one of the two positions currently held about this period.

Set it against the dates.

De Salviac and Bulatovich were writing in, or immediately after, the exact years in which an exogenous cattle pandemic and the famine that followed it killed up to a third of the population of the entire country — north and south, Christian and Muslim, conqueror and conquered, Shewan and Arsi alike. The emperor lost a quarter of a

million head of his own cattle. The northern peasantry, the population the conquest was launched *from*, was devastated. The Beta Israel were transformed. The Borana, who were barely conquered at all, lost up to ninety-five per cent of their herds.

Any figure attributing a halving of a southern population to the sword must first subtract a catastrophe that fell on everybody. It is not possible, on the evidence available, to say how much of the demographic collapse observed in the 1890s belongs to the conquest and how much to the rinderpest, and a study that produces a clean division is inventing one.

And the famine does not exonerate the conquest, for four reasons that have to be stated with equal force.

The conquest **did not pause**. Harar fell in January 1887, as the cattle were dying. The Arsi consolidation, the Gurage campaigns, Wolayta in 1894 and Kaffa in 1897 all ran through and immediately after the worst years. No campaign was postponed on account of the famine.

An army that **lives off the districts it passes through** is a multiplier in a famine. That is not an inference; it is the documented method of Ethiopian warfare, and Caulk's account of soldiers as predators on the peasantry describes precisely the mechanism by which an army converts a bad harvest into a fatal one for the district it is standing in.

The **extraction did not stop**. A *gabbar* obliged to render a third to a half of his harvest in 1890 was rendering half of nothing, and the obligation was enforced by a man with a rifle who also had to eat.

And the famine plausibly **accelerated** the conquest rather than impeding it. With the oxen dead and the fields unploughed, a man's best remaining prospect was to march south with an army that would feed him out of somebody else's granary — and the southern provinces, wetter and worked by hoe and by ensete rather than by plough and ox, were less exposed to the loss of cattle and therefore more valuable as an object.

The honest statement is therefore this, and it is uncomfortable for both of the positions currently in the field. **The conquest and the famine are not separable events; the direction of causation runs mostly from the famine to the conquest rather than the reverse; and the arrangement's contribution was not to cause the catastrophe but to determine who bore it.** The empire did not import the rinderpest — an Italian army did. It did decide, in each of the following years, that the campaigns would continue, that the armies would be fed from the country, and that the tribute would be collected.

One further caution, and it disqualifies every number in this section from any confident use. **There is no population figure for Ethiopia in this period that can**

bear weight. The first national census was taken in 1984. Every nineteenth-century figure is a traveller's estimate or a back-projection, the estimates in circulation differ by factors that make ratios meaningless, and de Salviac's ten million is itself an estimate of exactly that kind. A halving of an unknown number is not a measurement.

The other hierarchy's column

Between 1935 and 1941 a different armed group came, and the sword that fell was not this arrangement's, but it fell on the same people and the accounting has to record it.

The Ethiopian government's own total for the Italian war and occupation is 760,300, itemised as two hundred and seventy-five thousand combatants killed in action, seventy-eight thousand five hundred patriots killed during the occupation, seventeen thousand eight hundred civilians killed by bombing, thirty thousand in the February 1937 massacre, thirty-five thousand dead in concentration camps, twenty-four thousand executed by summary courts, and three hundred thousand dead of privation after the destruction of their villages. Italy disputed the total and argued for roughly half of it. Estimates for the Addis Ababa massacre of February 1937 — Yekatit 12, following the attempt on Graziani — range from around fourteen hundred to thirty thousand, with a 2017 study putting it at approximately nineteen thousand two hundred, some twenty per cent of the city's population; around two thousand monks and others were killed at Debre Libanos. Mustard gas was used from the air, in violation of the Geneva Protocol Italy had signed, at a number of named localities.

Those figures are contested by parties with present political stakes, in both directions, and are given here as claims with their claimants attached.

What the Italian occupation did to the arrangement was set out in the previous module: it formally dissolved the *gabbar* obligation in 1941 and left the land where it was. And after the arrangement itself ended in 1974, its successor opened an account of its own — the Red Terror of 1977–78, in which tens of thousands were killed, many of them the students whose slogan the new government had adopted. That belongs to the Derg's ledger and not to this one, and it is noted only because a study that stops at 1974 can leave the impression that what followed was a settling.

The forgetting, and where it did not happen

Return to the tenant in Sidamo in 1965.

For him and for the man he paid, the conquest was gone. Not denied — gone, in the way the framework describes: the origin had become the furniture of reality, and no

one living had made it. The landlord's family had held that ground for seventy years. The church had stood there for sixty. The measurement was in a register nobody consulted. This is what a successful settlement produces, and the framework's proposition is that the forgetting is what makes the order cheap: an arrangement that must be constantly re-justified is expensive, and one that has become the world costs nothing.

But the forgetting was not symmetrical, and the reason is the finding of an earlier module.

Menelik's empire outlawed the *caffee* assemblies and left the naming rite. It removed the layer at which the conquered's formation was a government and left running the layer at which it was a person — the generation-classes, the transition at eight where the head is shaved and the name conferred by the passage, the *qaalluu*, Irreecha, the memorised descent, the language in the household. That machinery went on installing a complete frame in every child of every generation for eighty years. And a frame of that kind carries what it was given, including an account of who took what and when.

So the conquest was forgotten by the people who profited from it and remembered by the people who paid for it, and the memory was carried in the formation the conqueror had declined to displace. That is why the monument at Anole went up in 2014 and not in 1914 — not because the memory was invented in 2014, but because a memory maintained in a formation with no political institution to attach to waits until one arrives.

A conquest is forgotten by its beneficiaries and remembered by its victims, and the vehicle of the remembering is whatever formation the conqueror left running. A conqueror who destroys the rival formation entirely produces amnesia and is hated by nobody in particular within three generations. A conqueror who replaces it produces subjects who share his account. A conqueror who leaves it standing minus its assembly produces, at length, a population with an intact grievance, an intact cosmology, an intact language, and no institution — which is a description of the Ethiopian south in 1960 and an explanation of most of what has happened there since.

Reading the accounting against the framework

Five findings.

Metabolic debt has two triggers, not one, and this case isolates the second. The framework has treated the note as called by the disruption of coordination — conquest breaking the irrigation, revolution breaking the administration, collapse breaking the granaries. Ethiopia in 1888 shows the note called with the coordination entirely intact: the state, the church, the land system, the terraces and the knowledge all stood, and the

population died anyway, because an imported virus destroyed the draught animals on which the whole intensive system depended. **A metabolic debt may be called either by disrupting the coordination or by destroying the capital the coordination operates**, and the second is faster, is invisible to political history, and can occur under a functioning government whose records show nothing wrong. Any case in this collection showing a mass mortality without an obvious administrative breakdown should be examined for a shock to the capital stock — draught animals, seed, irrigation works, boats, mills — before it is attributed to weather.

Where a conquest and a metabolic collapse are contemporaneous, they cannot be apportioned, and the attempt is always politically motivated. The single most-cited demographic claim about this conquest was made by observers writing during the years in which an exogenous famine killed up to a third of the population of the whole country including the conquerors. Neither of the two available positions can survive that observation intact — the conquest cannot be credited with a halving that a cattle plague was independently producing, and it cannot be exonerated by a famine it ran straight through, fed its armies during, and taxed. **The correct output of an accounting under these conditions is a range and a statement of what cannot be known**, and a study that produces a clean total has stopped doing history.

An order that extracts by assignment cannot count its own dead, and the absence of a body count is a property of the extraction system rather than of the archive. There are no returns because there was never a mechanism that would have produced returns; the same absence that made this empire's revenue uncountable makes its violence uncountable. The historian who finds a well-documented atrocity and a poorly documented one should not conclude that the first was worse. He should ask which of the two regimes had somebody to report to.

The forgetting is what makes a settlement cheap, and it is asymmetric by construction. The beneficiaries forget because nothing in their lives requires them to remember and everything in their interests recommends against it; the victims remember because the arrangement is the daily fact of their existence. The asymmetry is not a moral difference between the two populations. It is a difference in what their positions oblige them to notice.

And the vehicle of the remembering is the formation the conqueror failed to displace — which closes the circuit this study opened four modules ago. A conquest that leaves the rival formation running installs its own indictment in every child of the conquered for as long as the formation lasts, and the indictment surfaces whenever a political vehicle appears to carry it. The cost of the cheapest option in the formation module is paid here, a century later, in the accounting.

Weakest evidence, stated on its face. Every number in this module is an estimate, most of them are contested, and several are politically load-bearing in a live argument. The figure of one-third for the Great Famine's mortality is a widely repeated estimate resting ultimately on Pankhurst's 1966 assessment and on missionary and travellers' reports, in a country with no census before 1984; it should be read as an order of magnitude. The rinderpest mortality figures come from Italian observers and later reconstructions. The Wolayta figure of a hundred and eighteen thousand is untraceable and is repeated here only to be discounted. De Salviac's ten-million baseline has not been consulted in the original and is an estimate of an unknown quantity. The Adwa *ascari* mutilations are reported and unverified here. The Italian occupation figures are the Ethiopian government's own itemised total against an Italian counter-claim of roughly half. This module should be read as a demonstration of what can and cannot be established, not as a total.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. Paraphrased from modern scholarship and credited: Richard Pankhurst, whose two-part assessment of the Great Ethiopian Famine in the *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* (1966) remains the standard treatment, and whose work on famine and epidemic in Ethiopia underlies the whole of the second column; Steven Kaplan on *kifu-qen* and the Beta Israel; the epizootiological literature on the 1890s African rinderpest panzootic, including Morens and others, for the route of entry via Italian military cattle imports from India and for the mortality rates; Richard Caulk on armies as predators on the peasantry; Abbas Haji Gnamo and Bahru Zewde for the Arsi figures; Jules Borelli, as reported in the secondary literature, for the sack of Harar; Alexander Bulatovich, paraphrased, for the cost of the Rudolf expedition. Martial de Salviac's *Un peuple antique au pays de Ménélik* (Paris, 1901) has not been consulted and its figure is discussed only as it is reported by others — which, given the weight that figure carries in the present-day argument, is the most important gap in this study and should be closed by anyone continuing it.

MODULE 12

The Verb and the Rope

Convergence and divergence: what this case did to the proposition it was chosen to test, where it sits against the conquests with metropoles and the one without, and the strongest case against everything above — stated in full and answered.

Two objects

This study can be reduced to two things a man could hold in his hands.

The first is a verb. In Article XVII of the Treaty of Wuchale the Italian text has the King of Kings *consenting to avail himself* of Italy for his dealings with other powers, and the Amharic text has him able to do so if he wishes, and Article XIX between them certifies that the two versions agree perfectly. Menelik ceded four provinces in Article III and never recovered them; Italy held Eritrea through Adwa and after. What he fought a war over was the difference between *shall* and *may* — which is to say, over a description of himself held by people three thousand miles away. He traded territory for that description twice: once in 1889 to obtain it, and once in 1896 to get it in writing.

The second is a rope. The *qalad* was dragged across the southern highlands district by district for thirty years, turning kinship, clearing-right, office and standing into a countable number of *gasha* that could be written beside a soldier's name. It converted a continent-sized relation between persons into a thing. It was performed by measurers and clerks. And this study went looking for the statute that authorised it — the ordinance, the vacancy declaration, the divisibility act, the charter of recognition — and did not find one, because there was not one, because nobody was going to ask.

A war over a word, and a revolution performed by a piece of string. Everything in the twelve modules sits between those two objects, and the proposition the study was built to test is the question of why they are so different.

What the case was chosen to test

The Asante study proposed, on a single case, that the corpus's colonial bend is misnamed. Its argument was that the bend's whole predictive power comes not from conquest, or race, or capitalism, or Europe, but from one fact: that a colonial conqueror acts at a distance on behalf of people who will read about it. Remove the metropole — the distant constituency with its own politics, its own belief in its own

lawfulness, its own settlers and taxpayers and ledgers — and the legal fictions, the caste-sorted extraction, the withheld formation, the split seam, the settler override and the collapse-by-metropolitan-exhaustion all vanish, while the conquest, the extraction and the killing stay exactly where they were.

Ethiopia was chosen because it splits the variable. Menelik answered to nobody at home: no parliament, no taxpayer, no press worth the name, no franchise, no public whose belief funded the enterprise. And he answered continuously and in writing to five European governments, because their recognition was the difference between being a sovereign and being partitioned.

A conquest with an audience but no metropole. The prediction was sharp: the outward-facing half of the bend should appear and the inward-facing half should not.

The result, reported plainly

The outward-facing half is present in full, and the confirmation is about as strong as a single case can give.

The conquest was narrated to Europe as it happened and sometimes before it happened. Menelik announced Embabo — a private war between two of another emperor's vassals — to the European powers in 1882. He set out the historical and economic justifications for the Harar campaign to King Umberto I in advance of conducting it. In April 1891 he circulated to five governments a definition of the boundaries he intended to recover, written entirely in Europe's own justificatory idiom: an island of Christians in a sea of pagans, a coastline lost to Muslims, an appeal to the Christian Powers advised by our Saviour, and a claim running to Khartoum and Lake Victoria. He signed treaties, exchanged legations, and had his conquests written into the map of Africa as the territory of a recognised power.

He built the exhibits, too. A coin, authorised under a convention with Italy that specified an Italian mint, struck instead at Paris in 1894, urged on him by European advisers who told him coinage and postage stamps were a strong sign of sovereignty — and which, around 1900, circulated only in Addis Ababa and constituted **five per cent of the coins in his own treasury**, while salt bars remained money until at least 1911 and his bank imported over a million Maria Theresa thalers a year. A railway concession, a bank capitalised from Cairo, a hospital, a telephone line, four schools. And a slave policy shaped precisely to the auditor's field of view: no slave market in the capital where the legations were, decrees against the *trade* and not the institution, adherence to the Brussels Act — which, incidentally, legalised his arms imports — and caravans running from Jimma to Zeila every year while Beni Shangul rendered tribute to the central government in slaves.

The inward-facing half is split, and the split is the finding.

Two clauses are absent, cleanly, as predicted. There is **no settlement statute** — no vacancy, no recognition, no divisibility, no drafted instrument at all, only a rope, a rank schedule and a claim about the fourteenth century, which this study has named *reversion* and offered to the corpus as a fourth settlement fiction: the one available to a conqueror with a chronicle tradition and no auditor, because it can be spoken instead of written. And there are **no fiscal statistics** — no budget, no returns, no series, because an empire that assigns households to individuals produces no aggregate to audit. The greatest part of what was taken was labour, extracted at the point of production by the man who benefited, and it never became visible to anybody including the emperor.

One clause is present but differently generated. **Extraction was caste-sorted**, into three columns that persisted for eighty years — but the sorting rule was conquest status rather than descent, the elite was genuinely open at the top, and there was no colour bar and no racial doctrine. And yet, because position transmitted through land and land transmitted through families, a rule written in 1886 about what a king had done produced by 1930 a distribution that mapped onto ethnicity closely enough that *neftenya* became a synonym for *Amhara*. **A heritable non-racial sorting becomes a racial sorting in effect within two generations, because the only thing that transmits is the position.**

And one clause fails outright, which is the productive part.

Where the hypothesis lost

Formation was withheld, and the metropole cannot be the reason, because there was no franchise to protect.

The colonial mechanism is specific and it is well documented in the corpus. Kenya declined to form the Kikuyu into its own belief because forming them into it would have meant admitting them into it, and admission was a claim on a political community that was a scarce good at home. The formation and the citizenship were the same substance, and the ceiling was raised just high enough to admit a fragment — the mission-schooled convert, the Christian chief's educated son — and no higher.

Menelik had no such constraint and the proof is on the record. **Ras Gobana Dacche was an Oromo who conquered Oromo country and became one of the greatest men in the empire. Fitawrari Habte Giyorgis Dinagde was taken captive in the southern campaigns and became Minister of War for thirty years, President of the Council of Ministers, and the man who deposed an emperor in 1916. Ras Mikael of Wollo was an Oromo and a convert from Islam who became the most**

powerful man in the country and the father of the designated heir. Nothing structural stood between a formed southerner and the top of the order. Formation would have admitted him, and admission was available.

It was withheld anyway. The reasons this study found are that the only formation apparatus in the country belonged to a church the emperor did not control and could not fund, that the church opposed even his four schools so effectively that he had to import Egyptian Copts to staff them, and that the settlement paid for itself without anyone in the south believing anything at all.

So the hypothesis is narrowed rather than confirmed, and the narrowing is the study's principal contribution to it. **The accountability bend is not one bend but two, and they have different causes.**

The **outward-facing** apparatus — the legal fictions, the published justifications, the treaty instruments, the revenue statistics, the currency, the gazettes, the reforms aimed at the auditor's declared values — is generated by the presence of a party who can withdraw something the order cannot replace and who will read a document before deciding. That party need not be a metropole. Europe funded nothing of Menelik's conquest and manned none of it; what it held was a veto on whether he counted as a sovereign, and that was enough to produce the entire apparatus. So was a lien: the one point in this empire where a revenue stream acquired real assessment, collection and remittance was the Harar customs, which Menelik had pledged as security against his Italian loan. **A creditor is a constituency.** The variable is not the metropole. It is the auditor, and the apparatus grows to face him and stops at the edge of his interest.

The **inward-facing** features — withheld formation, sorted extraction, a sealed base — are **overdetermined**. They have at least two independent generators: franchise anxiety, which is the colonial one, and simple incapacity coupled with not needing the belief, which is this one. Removing the metropole removes one generator and leaves the other standing. Which means the inward half is not diagnostic of accountability at all, and a case that shows withheld formation tells you nothing by itself about whether anyone was watching.

Against the conquests that had both

Set the case beside three that had an audience *and* a metropole and the divergences are sharp enough to be diagnostic.

Kenya taxed to move the body. The hut tax of 1901 and the poll tax of 1910 were payable in coin, and coin was obtainable by an ordinary Kikuyu in one way only — by leaving his land and working for a European. Sir Percy Girouard said in as many words that taxation was the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve

to seek work. In 1919 Governor Northey circularised his officials to exercise every possible lawful influence to induce able-bodied male natives into the labour field; London reacted, the circular was reworded, and the labour went on unchanged, which is the seam working exactly as designed.

Ethiopia performed no such manoeuvre, and the reason is the whole of the study's finding. It did not need to. A *gabbar* was simply told he owed two or three days a week and half his harvest, by a man standing in his field with a rifle. **The elaborate indirection of colonial extraction was never a technique for getting labour, because labour can be got much more simply by ordering it. It was a technique for getting labour while remaining legible as lawful to people three thousand miles away.**

Italian Somalia gave its intermediaries a job. The Somali *capo* received a salary. No land, because the land was *demanio*; no heritable office, because the appointment was the governor's; no jurisdiction beyond what a district commissioner allowed him that year. His position was not a possession.

The Ethiopian *balabbat* received a third of his district, kept it, drew tribute and labour from it, and passed it to his son. Which means — and the counter-position will want this, and is entitled to it — **the Ethiopian co-optation was materially more generous and structurally more durable than a European colonial one**, and it was more generous for a reason that has nothing to do with virtue: an empire with no cash could pay in nothing but land, and land is a possession, and a possession is defended by its holder for free.

Kenya destroyed the rival formation; Ethiopia left it running. When the Kikuyu, refused entry to the colonial formation, built their own — four hundred independent schools and their own churches — the colony closed every one of them in a single motion at the declaration of the Emergency in 1952. A formation you did not build and cannot enter is not an asset to be managed but an enemy to be destroyed.

Menelik outlawed the *caffee* assemblies and left the naming rite, the age-grades, the *qaalluu*, the ritual year, the memorised descent and the language of the household entirely alone. Nobody burned anything. And that turns out to be the more dangerous choice by a considerable margin, because Kenya faced a counter-formation it could see, built from nothing within twenty years, while Ethiopia faced one that had been installing a complete frame in every child of every generation continuously since before the conquest, with no institution to attach to and therefore nothing to raid. **Removing the institution and leaving the formation converts an organised rival into an unorganised and inextinguishable one** — it exchanges a body that could have been bargained with for a frame that cannot be reached.

And the collapse came from the wrong direction. The colonial cases end when the metropole's will empties, because the will was never local. Ethiopia's arrangement ended on 12 January 1974, when the Fourth Brigade at Negele Borana mutinied over bad food and no drinking water and made the emperor's envoy eat and drink as they did. Local men, local grievance, local force. Not one clause of the collapse came from outside.

Against Asante, which had neither

Three positions on one variable now exist in the corpus. Asante had no metropole and no external audience with a veto, and produced neither half of the bend. Ethiopia had an audience and no metropole, and produced the outward half completely and the inward half partially and for other reasons. Kenya, Somalia and Northern Nigeria had both, and produced everything.

The outward apparatus tracks the audience with no exceptions across the three positions. That is as clean a result as a comparative method of this kind can produce, and it is the single strongest piece of support the accountability hypothesis has.

What Ethiopia adds that Asante could not is the demonstration that the audience does not have to own you. It only has to be able to withhold something you cannot get anywhere else.

The strongest case against everything above

Now the counter-position, stated at its full strength and without straw.

Every category used in this study is a European category derived from European cases, and pointing it at an African state guarantees it will find colonial shapes there, because it was built to find them. What Menelik did in Arsi and Kaffa is what every state in the world was doing to its own periphery in the same decades. France absorbed Occitania and Brittany, suppressed their languages, and taught their children in Paris French. Britain cleared the Highlands and governed Ireland. Italy — the Italy that wrote Article XVII — had conquered the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies twenty-nine years before Wuchale, fought a decade-long war against its population, and was extracting from the Mezzogiorno on terms no better than the gabbar's. The United States was completing the same operation west of the Missouri while Menelik was at Adwa. Nobody calls the Risorgimento colonialism. Nobody applies the word to the incorporation of Brittany.

And the alternative to Menelik taking the south was never that the south stayed free. It was that the south was taken by Britain, France or Italy — which is not speculation, because Ras Wolde Giyorgis was sent to Lake Rudolf in 1898 explicitly to forestall British

and French claims, and the boundary treaties of 1897 to 1908 are the record of exactly how close the race was. The Arsi, the Kaffa and the Wolayta were going to be conquered. The only question was by whom, and the answer that actually occurred produced an order with no colour bar, no racial doctrine, no reserve, no pass law, and an elite that a captive taken in the conquest could rise to command. There is no European colony in Africa where that was structurally possible, and there could not have been.

Ethiopia entered the twentieth century as the one sovereign state in Africa, and it did so by doing what states do. To call that colonialism is to hold Africa's single successful state-builder to a standard applied to no European state of the same period, using a vocabulary invented to describe his enemies — and to hand, once again, the exact argument that Fascist Italy assembled and submitted to the League of Nations in 1935 as its justification for invasion.

That is the case. It contains a great deal that is true and this study will grant every part of it that is.

The answer

Grant the state-building comparison entirely. It is correct, and this collection has never pretended otherwise. Everything in these twelve modules would find similar shapes in the French absorption of the Midi, the Piedmontese conquest of the Two Sicilies, the Prussian settlement of the Polish provinces, or Rome in Gaul — and the corpus contains studies of several of those, applying the same instrument and reaching the same kinds of finding. The word *colonialism* is doing work it cannot sustain, and the argument about whether it applies here is unwinnable because it is an argument about a category rather than about facts. This study has deliberately not used it as a verdict.

Grant the counterfactual as a matter of fact. The south was going to be taken. Wolde Giyorgis planted a flag on both shores of Lake Rudolf on 29 March 1898 for exactly the reason the counter-position gives.

Grant the open elite without qualification, because it is the strongest fact the counter-position has and it is entirely real. A man captured as a boy in Menelik's own conquest of the south became his Minister of War, held the office for thirty years, and in 1916 led the army that removed an emperor. That has no colonial equivalent anywhere in Africa and the structure of a European colony forbade it.

Grant that the *balabbat*'s third was a better bargain than the *capo*'s salary or the squatter's contract, and that Adwa was a real and complete victory that nothing in this method permits diminishing.

Now refuse what has to be refused.

"Everyone did it" is a statement about the distribution of a practice, not a defence of it, and this collection has never accepted it from anybody. The same instrument has been turned on Rome, on Venice, on Prussia, on the Aztecs, on Britain and on the Dutch Republic, and none of them was excused by pointing at the others. Menelik gets identical treatment: no worse, and no better. **Legibility is not pardon, and neither is company.** If the finding is that the French did to Brittany what the Shewans did to Arsi, the correct conclusion is not that Arsi is thereby acquitted; it is that Brittany is thereby indicted, which is what the corpus has in fact concluded elsewhere.

A counterfactual cannot discharge a debt in the world that happened. That the Arsi would have been conquered by Italy does not un-kill the six to twelve thousand at Azule, who were killed by rifles imported under a treaty article a European power drafted and an Ethiopian emperor signed, and fired by men under the command of the emperor's uncle. The identity of the alternative supplier is not a defence available to the party that pulled the trigger, and it never has been in any other case in this collection.

The open elite and the sealed base are one finding, and the counter-position uses half of it. Habte Giyorgis rose because an apex facing a hereditary nobility he could not unmake needs servants who are nothing without him, and the deeper he reaches for them the more open his elite appears — which is a structural requirement, not a generosity, and it coexisted here with a base that was absolutely closed. A *gabbar* could not cross, and not because of his blood, to which the empire was genuinely indifferent, but because the qualification for entry had become a claim to land and his had been measured away by a rope. **An order can be truly open at the top and shut at the bottom, and citing the first in answer to the second is the oldest move in the defence of any hierarchy in this collection.** The ladder was real. It started above his head.

And the 1935 objection has to be met rather than absorbed. It is true that the first systematic account of the *gabbar* system published to the world was Fascist Italy's memorandum to the League, submitted as the case for expulsion and followed by an invasion. It is true that this poisoned the record for two generations, so that in the House of Lords a peer could credit Menelik's line on slavery in 1923 and another could call him one of the worst of the scramblers in 1942 with no new evidence between them, only a war. And it is true that saying these things out loud has been, ever since, indistinguishable from reciting a fascist's brief.

The answer is that **a fact does not become false because a villain found it useful, and the cost of pretending otherwise falls on the descendants of the people it happened to.** That cost has now been carried for ninety years. It was carried through

the postponement of any honest reckoning, so that when the reckoning finally arrived it arrived not as history but as ethnic grievance, in a country where the argument is now conducted with weapons. The way to take an argument away from bad people is not to concede it to them.

What the argument is actually about

The reason this quarrel never ends is that both of the available positions are accurate about different modules of the same machine, and each has to suppress the other's evidence to hold together.

Adwa was funded, in part, by the ivory, gold, coffee and captives of the conquered south. The empire that proved Africa could not be taken was paying for the proof with the subjugation of Africans. Habte Giyorgis was a captive and a kingmaker. The elite was open and the base was sealed. Menelik suppressed the slave market in his capital and took tribute in slaves from Beni Shangul. He decreed universal schooling for every six-year-old boy and girl in Ethiopia, backed by confiscation, and left four schools. He fought a war over a verb and performed a social revolution with a piece of string.

None of that is contradiction. It is what a state looks like when you stop asking whether it was good and start asking what it was made of.

So the verdict this study declines to give is the point of it. The achievement is real and does not require the self-justification: Menelik held a country together against a partition that took every other African polity, beat a European army in the field, and built an elite in which a man taken captive in his own conquest could rise to depose his heir. The cost is real and does not cancel the achievement: an order was laid on several million people who had no belief in it, no benefit from it, no exit from it, and no formation offered them by it, and it was held there for eighty years by armed men who lived off their labour, and the last of the people who lived under it are not dead yet.

Both sentences are true. A study that resolves them into a verdict has stopped measuring.

Reading the case against the framework

Rename the variable a second time. Asante proposed the accountability bend in place of the colonial bend. Ethiopia narrows it further: the generator is **an auditor** — any party who can withdraw something the order cannot obtain elsewhere and who will read a document before deciding — and a metropole is only the commonest species. A recognition-granting peer group produces the same apparatus. So does a

creditor with a lien on a named revenue stream. The test is not whether the conqueror has a home public; it is whether anybody with a veto is going to read something.

Split the bend in two. The outward-facing apparatus is diagnostic of an auditor and vanishes with him. The inward-facing features are overdetermined — franchise anxiety and simple incapacity produce the same withheld formation and the same sorted extraction — and are therefore diagnostic of nothing on their own. This is a real loss of predictive power and it should be recorded as such.

A fourth settlement fiction: reversion. Vacancy, recognition and divisibility are all legal fictions requiring a draftsman, which is a fact about a sample in which every case had a lawful public to satisfy. Reversion — the land was always ours and is coming back — needs only a chronicle tradition and an audience that honours it, and can be spoken instead of written.

And the finding that runs through all twelve modules. The disguise is a function of the audience, not of the appetite. The hut tax, the Crown Lands Ordinance, the *sénatus-consulte*, the labour circular and the annual report were never techniques for extracting more; they were techniques for extracting the same while remaining describable. Remove the reader and the extraction does not diminish. **It simply stops explaining itself** — and what is left is a rope, a rank schedule, and a man in a field being told what he owes.

A note on sources. This module quotes no primary text; it rests on the eleven modules preceding it, whose sources are given in their own notes. The comparative material is drawn from other studies in this collection: the Kenyan hut and poll taxes, Girouard's statement on taxation as the method of compelling labour, Northey's circular of 1919 and its rewording, the squatter ratchet and the closure of some four hundred independent schools in 1952 are from the British Kenya study; the Somali *capo*'s salary against the Buganda chief's eight square miles and the Sokoto emir's retained court are from the Italian Somalia and British Northern Nigeria studies; the statement of the accountability hypothesis and its five proposed revisions are from the Asante study's twelfth module. Each of those is quoted from its own text where it quotes primary sources, and none of it has been re-verified here.

The weakest links in this study as a whole, restated so that they are not lost in the summary: the outlawing of the *caffee* assemblies rests on Atseme via the Oromo studies literature and on Bartels, neither traced to an archival original, and it carries both the formation finding and the foreclosure column; the Anole account rests on oral tradition and the contemporary missionary source most cited in its support has not been consulted here; de Salviac's *Un peuple antique au pays de Ménélik* of 1901 has not been consulted at all, which matters because its ten-million baseline is the most

politically load-bearing number in the entire historiography; the claim that no settlement statute exists is a negative resting on a failure to find one; the Amharic wording of Wuchale XVII has not been checked against the text, though the entire dispute turns on one verb; the reading of Haile Selassie's reforms as having severed service from tenure is this study's own and is not drawn from a specialist literature that makes the argument in those terms; and almost nothing survives in which an ordinary *gabbar* speaks.